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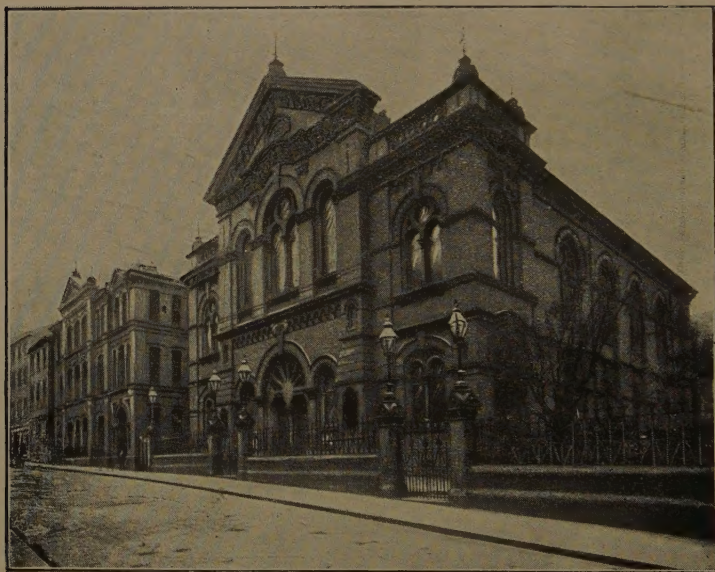
W. E. TATE CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH, NOTTINGHAM

CASTLE GATE CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH, NOTTINGHAM

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

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CASTLE GATE CHURCH AND SCHOOLS.

STORY OF CASTLE GATE
ONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
NOTTINGHAM, 1655-1905

BY

A. R. HENDERSON, M.A.

WITH TWELVE FULL-PAGE ILLUSTRATIONS

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MY WIFE

MY PARTNER AND COMRADE

IN SERVICE

AND TO

THE MEMBERS AND ADHERENTS

OF

CASTLE GATE CHURCH

I DEDICATE

THIS BOOK.

PREFACE

THIS book has been written at the request of the Deacons and Members of Castle Gate Church on the occasion of the Two Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary. Few Congregational Churches can boast of such a long and honourable history, and the book is sent forth in the hope that it may be of interest alike to past and present members of the congregation.

The chief sources of information are given in footnotes and other references throughout the volume. In addition to those, I have examined Minute Books, Account Books, Trust Deeds, and other documents belonging to the Church and Sunday School, and am under obligation to several of the members for personal reminiscences.

For the preparation of the Index, and for clerical assistance I am indebted to Mr. Thomas King, one of the students attached to the Church.

A. R. HENDERSON.

NOTTINGHAM,

November 15th, 1905.

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HISTORY OF CASTLE GATE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH NOTTINGHAM, 1655-1905

CHAPTER I

LANDMARKS

To understand the significance of our history it is necessary to make a rapid survey of the religious movement which began with the founding of the Church of England in the time of Henry the Eighth. Henry was at first a determined opponent of the Reformation, and a sturdy champion of the Pope. Till his time, Peter's pence continued to be paid to Rome. The Pope grievously offended Henry by refusing to sanction his divorce from Katharine, and the King's determination to have his own way proved stronger than his loyalty to the Church. Thus it happened that "the existence of the Church of England, as a distinct body, and her final separation from Rome, may be dated from the period of the divorce."¹ Henry created a Church, and took

¹ "Short's "History of the Church of England."

the place of the Pope as its "supreme head." It is not to be wondered at that a Reformation, carried out without spiritual insight or moral passion, was far from perfect. Many of the errors of the Romish Church were retained. It was not with Romish doctrine that Henry quarrelled, but with the Pope's interference with his domestic affairs. Hence in the Articles of Religion drawn up by the King, the doctrines of Baptismal Regeneration, Transubstantiation, and Purgatory were authoritatively taught, while Auricular Confession, Priestly Absolution, and Prayers to the Saints were commended. The system which he had established, Henry determined to enforce. "The law was now let loose against both Protestants and Catholics, but with peculiar vengeance against the former. Catholics were only hanged; Protestants were burned; Fisher was sent to the gallows; Anne Askew to the stake. And so the new Church was founded."¹

To the time of Henry the Eighth must be traced the rise of English Puritanism. In the closing years of the reign, John Hooper, an ardent Reformer, finding that he could not safely remain in the country, fled to Switzerland. At Zurich his zeal for the Reformation was intensified, and when Edward the Sixth ascended the throne he returned to England to become the "first Puritan Confessor," and the foremost preacher of his time. Considerable progress was made in the reformation of the Church

¹ "History of the Free Churches of England" (Skeats and Miall).

by the rejection, in the Second Book of Common Prayer, of the Doctrine of Transubstantiation, and the omission of Prayers for the Dead. The change, however, was not enough for Hooper. He called for the abolition of vestments, crosses, and altars. He refused a Bishopric because he would not wear the "garments of Popery"; he suffered imprisonment "because he would not be a Bishop." At last, "giving up a little, but holding much," he became Bishop of Gloucester in 1551. What might have happened had the reign of Edward the Sixth been prolonged it is impossible to tell. He loved Hooper, and under his spell might have gone far towards the complete reformation of the Church. Hooper cherished the hope of leading back his country to primitive Christianity, and was zealous in upholding the "Crown rights of Jesus." "Christ's Kingdom," says he, "is a spiritual one. In this neither Pope nor King may govern. Christ alone is the Governor of His Church, and the only law giver." With Mary's coming to the throne in 1553 the tide of reaction began to flow. Images were replaced, and the mass was restored. In two years, Mary, whose zeal for Rome knew no bounds, had broken down the opposition of her councillors and secured the passing of the laws against heresy. The stake was lighted, and hundreds won the martyr's crown. Rogers, who had assisted Tyndale in the translation of the Bible, died "bathing his hands in the flame as if it had been in cold water." Bishop Ridley, of London, as he stood at the stake in Oxford, was

encouraged by Latimer's memorable words, "Play the man, Master Ridley; we shall this day light such a candle, by God's grace, in England as I trust shall never be put out." "The sufferers were sent in batches to the flames. In a single day thirteen victims, two of them women, were burnt at Stratford-le-Bow."¹ Of this terrible persecution, Hooper, the founder of English Puritanism, and the strenuous advocate of religious liberty, was one of the first victims. He was burned in his own cathedral city on February 9th, 1555. In the place where, with consuming ardour, he had preached the Word of Life to the people, he received the Crown of Life from his Lord.

Elizabeth, Mary's successor to the throne, was a Protestant. It cannot be said, however, that she was eager to promote the principles of the Reformation. What she did with all her heart was to assert her own ecclesiastical authority. She claimed to be the "Supreme Governor" of the Church. For denying her supremacy in the Church, John Copping and Elias Thacker were dragged before the Lord Chief Justice at the Bury Assizes in June, 1583, and accused of treason. They were condemned to death. Strong in faith, they met their sentence with the answer, "My Lord, your face we fear not, and for your threats we care not, and to come to your read service we dare not." Elizabeth focussed her policy in two Acts—the Act of Supremacy and the Act of Uniformity. The former restored to the

¹ Green's "Short History of the English People."

Crown, "the ancient jurisdiction over the State, ecclesiastical and spiritual," and declared "that the King has power to redress and amend all errors and heresies; he might enjoin what doctrines he would should be preached, not repugnant to the laws of the land. And if any should preach contrary, he was for the third offence to be judged a heretic and suffer death." The latter was entitled "An Act for the Uniformity of Common Prayer and Divine Service in the Church, and the Administration of the Sacraments." Elizabeth succeeded in carrying out the Act of Supremacy; she failed in enforcing the Act of Uniformity. The Church became thoroughly subject to the Queen as its "Supreme Governor," and Bishops were unfrocked if they refused to do homage. But while Bishops might yield, the people were obstinate. "Upon the fatal rock of uniformity was the peace of the Church of England split." A fierce controversy ensued. The Puritans objected to every ceremony that reminded them of the Church of Rome. They revolted against the use of the cross in baptism, of the ring in marriage, of alb and stole and cope in ministry, and desired a simpler form of worship. They refused to accept the Episcopal theory of the ministry, and with Cartwright sought to stand under the banner of Presbyterianism within the Church, or with John Robinson found freedom in separation from the Church.

The rise of separation opens a new chapter in the ecclesiastical history of England. Down to the latter half of Elizabeth's reign the Puritan party,

consisting of Episcopalians and Presbyterians, protested against the corruptions of the Established Church, but did not dream of leaving its fold. The Puritans sought reform within the Church. "Most of the Puritans," says Neal, "were for keeping within the pale of the Church, apprehending it to be a true Church in its doctrines and sacraments, though defective in discipline, and corrupt in ceremonies; but being a true Church they thought it not lawful to separate, though they could hardly continue in it with a good conscience. They submitted to suspensions and deprivations; and when they were driven out of one diocese, took sanctuary in another, being afraid of incurring the guilt of schism by forcing themselves into separate communions."¹ It was inevitable, however, that men should be led to look, not at the fabric of the Church, but at its foundations. On what authority does it rest? The authority of the Pope was destroyed by Henry the Eighth; Copping and Thacker were hanged in 1583 for refusing to acknowledge the authority of Elizabeth; Cartwright was expelled from the University of Cambridge and afterwards driven into exile because he held that "Bishops should be selected only by the Church, and members were only ministers when called to a spiritual charge." Thus the authority of Pope, King, and Prelate had been undermined. Who then were responsible for the affairs of the Church of Christ? The inevitable answer was—the Christian people, under the control

¹ Neal's "History of the Puritans."

of Christ, the only head of the Church. This meant separation from the Church of Elizabeth. And it is well for England and for the world that there were men bold and honest enough to refuse to walk in the "left-handed policy," eating the bread, while they dissented from the creed, of the Church.

Elizabeth changed her policy soon after the three Independent martyrs, Barrowe, Greenwood, and Penry, were hanged for giving expression to "the yearning after a more direct communion between God and the soul than was offered by a Church which had for a time deposed the Sacraments from their place in the Christian system,"¹ and for their insistence on the supremacy of Christ, and the priesthood of all believers. Banishment was substituted for imprisonment and death. She emptied the jails and determined to clear the country of the Separatists whom she had failed to crush. An Act of Parliament made it penal "to abstain from coming to church to hear divine service, or to receive the Communion, according to Her Majesty's Laws and Statutes aforesaid, or to be present at any unlawful assemblies, conventicles, or meetings under pretence of any religion contrary to Her Majesty's said Laws and Statutes." Those who were guilty of this offence were "to be committed to prison . . . until they shall conform." The form of submission was as follows:—"I, A. B., do humbly confess and acknowledge that I have grievously offended God in contemning Her Majesty's godly and lawful Government and authority by

¹ "The Church and the Puritans," by Wakeman.

absenting myself from church and from hearing divine service, contrary to the godly laws and statutes of this realm, and in using and frequenting disordered and unlawful conventicles and assemblies, under pretence and colour of exercise of religion; and I am heartily sorry for the same," &c. Failing to make this confession and apology within three months, the Separatists had to "abjure this realm of England and all other the Queen's Majesty's Dominions for ever." Thus absolutism and intolerance fashioned the whip by which the Separatists were to be driven from Her Majesty's dominions. "What Elizabeth intended to do, and no doubt thought she had done, was to secure her dominions, for all time to come, from being troubled by Separatists. What she did do was to plant nurseries of freedom, destined, at a future period, to be fatal to the very principles of political and ecclesiastical government, whose permanency she had thought to secure."¹

Among those who felt the lash of Elizabeth's whip were Francis Johnson and Henry Ainsworth, who fled to Holland and became pastors of a church at Amsterdam. The life of these exiles was terribly hard. "They were almost consumed with deep poverty, loaded with reproaches, despised and afflicted by all." George Johnson (the brother of Francis) states that "many weeks" he "had not above sixpence or eightpence the week to live upon," while Roger Williams said of Henry Ainsworth that "though

¹ "History of the Free Churches of England" (Skeats and Miall).

a worthy instrument of God's praise, he lived upon ninepence in the week, and some boiled roots." One thing of priceless value they had gained—freedom to worship God according to their consciences.

In 1603, James came from Scotland to succeed Elizabeth on the throne. "His big head, his slobbering tongue, his quilted clothes, his rickety legs, stood out in as grotesque a contrast with all that men recalled of Henry or Elizabeth as his gabble and rhodomontade, his want of personal dignity, his buffoonery, his coarseness of speech, his pedantry, his contemptible cowardice."¹ In Scotland, James had to deal with Presbyterianism, whose leader, Andrew Melville, was not afraid to tell him that "there are two kings and two kingdoms in Scotland: there is Jesus Christ the King, and His Kingdom the Kirk, whose subject James the Sixth is, and of whose Kingdom, not a king, nor a lord, nor a head, but a member." Hence when James came to England he saw nothing so attractive as "its ordered and obedient Church, its Synods that met at the Royal will, its courts that carried out the Royal ordinances, its bishops that held themselves to be Royal officers." He revelled in his new position. The dominant Church was subservient to his will. The bishops, to promote their own designs, became his eager tools. They flattered him to the height of his ambition. Bancroft declared that God had given them "such a king as since Christ's time has not been." When James promulgated his doctrine of the Divine Right of

¹ Green's "Short History of the English People."

Kings, the bishops were ready, strange as it may seem, to proclaim it from the pulpit. To James, England seemed a glorious realm for a king. He became intoxicated with the Divine Right. "As it is atheism and blasphemy to dispute what God can do," said he, "so it is presumption and a high contempt in a subject to dispute what a king can do, or to say that a king cannot do this or that." And there was no Andrew Melville to take him by the sleeve and tell him that he was "God's sillie vassal," and no Scotch Presbyters to threaten and coerce him! Thirteen years before, standing in the Scottish General Assembly "with his bonnet off, and his hands lifted up to heaven," he praised God that he was born "in such a place as to be king of such a church, the sincerest Kirk in the world"; now he declared that "Scots Presbytery agrees with monarchy, as well as God and the devil." What did agree with monarchy was English prelacy, as exemplified in Whitgift and Bancroft. The bishops were a bulwark between him and the democracy he feared and hated. Hence his famous saying, "No bishop, no king!"

A king less vain than James might have suspected that in these theories "there were the seeds of a death-struggle between his people and the Crown." The seeds came to maturity in the reign of his successor, but James did not even suspect their presence. He treated with contempt the Millenary Petition in which eight hundred clergymen called upon him to reform the Church Courts, to abolish

pluralities, to remove "superstitious usages from the Book of Common Prayer, and to provide a more godly ministry. Instead of discussing these grievances, the King answered the Puritans with abuse, and broke up the Hampton Court Conference with the boast, "I will make them conform, or I will harry them out of the land."

Three years after James came to the throne, a small company of Separatists formed an Independent Church at Scrooby in Nottinghamshire. The members, few in number, "were of several towns and villages, some in Nottinghamshire, some in Lincolnshire, and some in Yorkshire, where they bordered nearest together." Their place of meeting was the Manor House at Scrooby, occupied by William Brewster, who was the elder of the little Church. "They ordinarily met," says Bradford, "at his house on the Lord's Day . . . and with great love he entertained them when they came, making provision for them to his own great charge." The pastor of the Church was Richard Clifton, "a grave and fatherly old man, having a great white beard," who "converted many to God by his faithful and painful ministry, both in preaching and catechising." One of the members, William Bradford, became one of the Pilgrim Fathers, and, as Governor of Plymouth, helped to lay the foundation of the great Commonwealth of America. The most remarkable member of the Scrooby Church, however, was John Robinson, who may well be regarded as the father of English Independency. He was educated at Corpus

Christi College, Cambridge, and became a Fellow in 1599. In the following year he commenced his ministry at Norwich. The Bishop of the diocese soon found fault with his Puritan opinions, and Robinson came reluctantly to see that he must sever his connection with the Church of his youth. How much it cost him to secure his liberty we may judge from his own words. "Had not the truth been in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, I had never broken those bonds of flesh and blood wherein I was so straitly tied, but had suffered the light of God to have been put out in mine own unthankful heart by other men's darkness." Robinson, cast out of the Church of England, united himself to the Scrooby Separatists and became their teacher and leader. The little Church was not long in feeling the effect of the King's determination to harry Nonconformists out of the country. "Some," says Bradford, "were taken and clapt up in prison; others had their houses beset and watched night and day, and hardly escaped their hands, and the most were fain to fly and leave their houses and habitations and the means of their livelihood." After making repeated attempts, and enduring the greatest hardships, the Separatists at last escaped to Holland, and finally settled in the city of Leyden in 1609. The Church at Leyden prospered greatly under the pastoral care of John Robinson. "They lived together," says Bradford, "in love and peace all their days without any considerable difference or any disturbance that grew thereby, but such as was easily healed in love." To the same

effect Winslow testifies, "I persuade myself never people on earth lived more lovingly together." Leyden, however, was but a resting-place by the way. The difficulty of obtaining a living, the feeling that they were in a foreign land, the low standard of morals around them, the fear lest their children should in a few years "lose their language and their name of English," made them turn their faces to the west in the hope that they might "more glorify God, do more good to their country, better provide for their posterity, and live to be more refreshed by their labours than ever they could do in Holland." In 1620 the "Mayflower" carried the Pilgrim Fathers to New England to lay the foundations of the American Commonwealth on the enduring basis of civil and religious liberty.

With the reign of Charles the First began a life and death struggle for Parliamentary liberty. Well might the courtiers who saw him in his youth pray that "he might be in the right way when he was set, for if he was in the wrong he would prove the most wilful of any kings that ever reigned." The conflict began as soon as Charles ascended the throne. The temper of the young king was revealed in his interview with the Commons at Whitehall in 1626. "Remember," said he, "that Parliaments are altogether in my power for their calling, sitting, and dissolution; and, therefore, as I find the fruits of them to be good or evil, they are to continue or not to be." But the Commons were as resolute as the king, and behind the Commons stood the country.

Charles needed money to carry on his reckless wars abroad, and his wasteful government at home. The people refused to pay "save by way of Parliament." "A Parliament! a Parliament! else no subsidies!" was their cry. The Laudian clergy used their pulpits to enforce "passive obedience." One of them, preaching before the king, declared that "the king needed no Parliamentary warrant for taxation, and that to resist his will was to incur eternal damnation." Eliot, Hampden and Pym led the people in the fight against absolutism. In the famous Petition of Right, the Commons asked "that no man hereafter be compelled to make or yield any gift, loan, benevolence, tax, or suchlike charge, without common consent by Act of Parliament. And that none be called to make answer, or to take such oaths, or to be confined or otherwise molested or disputed concerning the same, or for refusal thereof. And that no freeman may in such manner as is before mentioned be imprisoned or detained. . . . All which they humbly pray your most excellent Majesty, as their rights and liberties, according to the laws and statutes of the realm." The king consented in order to gain supplies, but made certain reservations which largely nullified his assent. The struggle came to a head in 1636, when John Hampden refused to pay the ship money. The judges by a majority decided against him, the Chief Justice summing up their opinion by declaring that "Acts of Parliament to take away the King's royal power in the defence of his kingdom are void . . . they are

void Acts of Parliament to bind the King not to command the subjects, their persons, and goods, and I say their money too, for no Acts of Parliament make any difference." The judges might condemn, but the people applauded the man who in the sacred cause of freedom had dared the wrath of the King. When the Long Parliament met in 1640, the end of the conflict between king and people was in sight. Under the leadership of Pym, the ablest of the noble band of patriots who fought for constitutional liberty, the Earl of Strafford was impeached and executed. All hope of an agreement between the Commons and the Crown was now at an end. In 1641, Pym appealed to the nation by issuing the Grand Remonstrance. On January 3, 1642, Charles sent his Serjeant-at-arms to demand the surrender of Hampden, Pym, Hollis, Strode, and Haselrig, whom he accused of high treason. He went in person the following day to seek them. The five members had flown. The king sought them in the City. The aldermen refused to give them up. Then came the last act of all. The king resolved on war. On 22nd August, 1642, he raised the Royal Standard at Nottingham, on the spot still known as Standard Hill, and the Great Civil War began, which issued finally in the introduction of the Commonwealth, and the execution of Charles in 1649.

Charles committed the ecclesiastical affairs of the country into the hands of Laud. So long ago as 1620, the Pilgrim Fathers had shown the way to freedom, and from 1629, Puritan emigrants in great

numbers followed them to the new world. They were "driven forth from their fatherland, not by earthly want, or by greed of gold, or by the lust of adventure, but by the fear of God, and the zeal for a godly worship."¹ Between 1629 and 1640 "two hundred emigrant ships had crossed the Atlantic, and twenty thousand Englishmen had found a refuge in the west." Laud used the Court of High Commission as his instrument of attack on the Puritans. It was empowered "to visit, reform, redress, order, correct, and amend all errors, heresies, schisms, abuses, offences, contempts and enormities whatsoever." Heavy fines were imposed; men were pilloried, and whipped, and mutilated, and left for years in cold dark dungeons in order that Puritanism might be suppressed. "Rectors and vicars were scolded, suspended, deprived for gospel preaching. The use of the surplice, and the ceremonies most offensive to Puritan feeling were enforced in every parish." It was all in vain. Scotland had been roused to rebellion by the imposition of Episcopacy. The Covenant was signed amid the greatest enthusiasm, some even drawing blood from their veins with which to write their names. In England the Presbyterians had become so powerful that they insisted on the establishment of their own polity. Laud was in prison. The fortunes of his party depended on the success of the king. With the downfall of Charles, Episcopacy was overthrown. A Presbyterian settlement might have been a success

¹ Green's "Short History of the English People."

had Parliament been in favour of religious liberty. The attempt, however, to substitute one form of intolerance for another was a failure. "What greater hypocrisy," said Cromwell, "than for those who were oppressed by the Bishops to become the greatest oppressors themselves so soon as their yoke was removed."¹ Many of the exiled Independents returned from Holland and from America. Milton began to use his powerful pen in favour of Independency, and declared that "new presbyter is but old priest writ large." The five representatives of Independency in the Westminster Assembly of Divines pleaded for a measure of toleration. They desired to be included in the new National Church and to have liberty to govern themselves in their own way. The Presbyterians refused their request, and the attempt to give the Independents a place in the National Church came to an end when Jeremiah Burroughs uttered the famous protest: "If their congregations might not be exempted from that coercive power of the classes: if they might not have liberty to govern themselves in their own way as long as they behaved peaceably towards the civil magistrates, they were resolved to suffer, and go to some other place in the world whence they might enjoy their liberty. But while men think that there is no way of peace but by forcing all to be of the same mind, while they think the civil sword is an ordinance of God to determine all controversies of divinity, and that it must needs be attended with

¹ Cromwell's "Letters and Speeches."

fines and imprisonment to the disobedient, there must be a base subjection of men's consciences to slavery, a suppression of moral truth, and great disturbances in the Christian world."

In the meantime a new movement was taking place outside Parliament and the Assembly. In the fight with the Royalist forces Oliver Cromwell had come to the front, and the freedom which was refused by the Assembly found a practical illustration in the army. To the men in Cromwell's army religion was more than polity. Amid every variety of denominational opinion the same spiritual life found utterance in the prayer-meetings of the camp. "Presbyterians, Independents, all have here" wrote Cromwell of his army, "the same spirit of faith and prayer; the same presence and answer; pity is it should be otherwise anywhere . . . in things of the mind we look for no compulsion but that of light and reason." The attitude of the army was expressed in the words "we will not have any restraint laid on the consciences of men for religious differences." "Wise men, musing in their closets," says the Rev. J. B. Marsden, a Church historian, "had for some time questioned the wisdom, if not the justice, of compelling the dissatisfied to embrace the religion of the greatest number and making their dissent a crime. But Cromwell was the first who dared not merely to give expression to the doubt, but to enrol the principle itself with the fundamental laws of England."

In the struggle for religious freedom, both the

Parliament and the monarchy disappeared. Repeated attempts were made to disband the army, but the army, which had sacrificed blood and treasure in the fight for liberty of conscience, refused to be disbanded. The soldiers of the "new model" looked on themselves not as swordsmen, to be caught up and flung away at the will of a paymaster, but as men who had left farm and merchandise at the direct call of God. A great work had been given them to do, and the call bound them till it was done. Parliament was cleared by Pride's Purge on 6th December, 1648, and in less than four months the Act was passed which proclaimed "that the People of England and of all the dominions and territories thereunto belonging are, and shall be, and are hereby constituted, made, established, and confirmed to be a Commonwealth and Free State, and shall henceforth be governed as a Commonwealth and Free State by the supreme authority of this nation, the representatives of the People in Parliament, and by such as they shall appoint and constitute officers and ministers for the good of the people, and that without King or House of Lords."

It is to the period of the Commonwealth, when England enjoyed a larger measure of religious freedom than any former age had known, that we trace the beginnings of Castle Gate Church.

CHAPTER II

NOTTINGHAM TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTY
YEARS AGO

IN their desire to glorify

“Fair Nottingham, with brilliant beauty graced,
In ancient Shirwoods south-west corner placed”

some have traced the foundation of the town to the dim antiquity of pre-Christian ages. We are on certain ground, however, when we come to the Saxon period. “The Saxons were wise enough to avail themselves of the formidable situation of the town; with its caves serving as store-houses for plunder or places of retreat in the hour of peril. The lofty rock, girt with giant woods, affording at once a profuse supply of game and fuel; the Trent, a barrier against foes, and yielding both water and fish; together with the sweet southern exposure of the spot, were inducements not to be overlooked.”¹ In those days the Castle Rock was surmounted by a strong tower, and after the Danish invasion, Nottingham was the scene of many a fierce encounter between Saxons and Danes, who in turn were masters of the place. When the Normans, under William the Conqueror, invaded England, Nottingham held out for some time. After

¹ Wylie's “Old and New Nottingham.”

much bloodshed, its defenders were forced to surrender, and the Conqueror, "to bridle the English," replaced the old Saxon tower with a castle in the Norman style, "so strong by nature and art that it properly defended, it seemed as if nothing but a famine could force it." How hardly the Saxons were pressed by the Norman conquerors may be judged from the fact that the town was at this time divided into two boroughs "by a line drawn along what is now Clumber Street, Bridlesmith's Gate, Drury Hill, and Sussex Street." On the east of this line lay the English borough; on the west, including the Castle, the French borough. Each had its own town-hall, mint, law-courts, and laws. A Norman was considered of so much more value than an Englishman that "when a case of bloodshed came before a justice of the peace, the prisoner had to pay six shillings and four-pence if the assault had been committed in the English borough, while eighteen shillings was the fine if the luckless assailant had offended in the French borough." From this time onwards Nottingham was visited by most of the English kings, and was often chosen as the meeting-place of parliaments and privy councils. Dr. Thoroton, one of the historians of the town, writing about the middle of the seventeenth century, says, "No part that I know of in all England, so far from London, has so often given entertainment to the kings and queens of the realm."

Two hundred and fifty years ago the area covered by the town was comparatively small. Old prints

reveal four great landmarks: the Castle, on its lofty rock above the murmuring Leen; St. Nicholas Church, from whose tower the Cavaliers fired with deadly effect on the Roundheads who kept the Castle under Colonel Hutchinson; St. Peter's Church, which was bounded on the south side by a bog, and St. Mary's, whose grey tower rose "as if to meet her children's love." Nearly the whole of the town was included between the two great rocks on which stood the Castle at one end and St. Mary's at the other. In 1610, John Speed published a map of Nottingham in which the boundaries of the town can be easily traced. "Parliament Street, Broad Street, and Goose Gate formed the northern boundary of the borough; Water Lane and Sneinton Street, the eastern. The north sides of Broad Marsh and Chesterfield Street, with Narrow Marsh, Fisher Gate, and Willoughby Row, bounded the town on the south." The Castle formed the western boundary. Wylie, in his "Old and New Nottingham," thus conducts the traveller round the outer boundaries of the town as it was two hundred and fifty years ago: "You desire to perambulate the town—the Castle your starting point. Standard Hill is an open field, and you do not reach a house till you arrive at the corner of St. James's Street. You pursue your way along the outside streets—Mount Street, Chapel Bar, the foot of Tollhouse Hill, Upper Parliament Street, Milton Street, Lower Parliament Street, St. John Street, Coalpit Lane, Hockley, Count Street, Carter Gate, Fisher Gate, Narrow

Marsh, Broad Marsh, Greyfriars Gate, Chesterfield Street and Walnut-tree Lane. The town is compassed, and you are once more at the Castle!" Between the Leen and the Trent is a broad stretch of meadow land on which the cattle of the burgesses browsed. "From St. Peter's Churchyard through Lister Gate to the Leen extended a dismal swamp." Away to the north-west stretched the ancient forest of Sherwood, whose mighty oaks had withstood the tempests of a thousand years. Nor must we suppose that even within the narrow limits of the town were crowded cramped courts, and dense masses of houses. Two hundred and fifty years ago the population was probably not more than 5,000 or 6,000. Hence the people had plenty of room. Gardens stretched from the Market Place to Parliament Street. An orchard "shaded the pathway leading from Mount Street to the lower end of Park Row." "In the South Parade, in Wheeler Gate, in St. Peter's Square and Peck Lane, cattle browsed and fields were cultivated." We read of a grass field in Pilcher Gate, a cherry orchard in Coalpit Lane, and large gardens in Clumber Street and Broad Street.

" All gone! All gone!
I've seen when all this ground
Stood thick with primroses in spring
And bluebells nodding round."

Thirteen years before the history of Castle Gate Church begins, the people of Nottingham saw the standard of Charles the First erected on Standard Hill "with great shouting, acclamations, and sound

of drums and trumpets." On 10th July, 1642, he came to Nottingham and "summoned and caressed the freeholders of the county," and promised, as he had done at York, "that he would not exercise any illegal authority, but defend them, and all others, against the votes of Parliament, and not engage them in any war against the Parliament." On 22nd August he marched from the Castle and unfurled his standard. In less than a month, disappointed that the challenge of battle had drawn so few to his side, the King left Nottingham, to have his first encounter with the Parliamentary forces at Edge Hill, and the Castle fell into the hands of the Parliamentarians. In the following years its custody was committed to the noble young Puritan, Colonel Hutchinson, whose portrait is so charmingly etched in the Memoirs written by his wife. Colonel Hutchinson's task was no easy one. The Castle buildings, his wife informs us, "were very ruinous and uninhabitable, neither affording room to lodge soldiers nor provisions. . . . It was as ill provided as fortified." Nearly all the men of wealth in the county were ardent Royalists. In the town itself were many sympathisers of the King, by whom several attempts were made to poison and betray the Parliamentary troops. The temper of the governor of the Castle was revealed, however, in this brave speech to his soldiers:—"They must expect the enemy, and to be reduced to the utmost extremity by them that thought could reach; it must not move them to see their own houses flaming, and if need were

themselves firing them, for the public advantage; to see the pieces of their families cruelly abused and consumed before them; they must resolve upon hard duty, fierce assaults, poor and sparing diet, perhaps famine, and want of all comfortable accommodations, nor was there any apparent hope of relief at last, but more than common hazard of losing their lives . . . all which, for his own part, he was resolved on, and if any of them found his courage failing, he only desired that they would provide for their safety in time elsewhere, and not prejudice him and the public interest so highly as they would do, to take upon them the defence of the Castle, except they could be content to lay down their lives, and all their interests in it."¹ For three years the Castle was the centre of repeated conflicts between the Royalists and its defenders. On one occasion, by treachery of Alderman Toplady, the enemy was let into the town by night. "All the horse, and about two parts of the Castle soldiers, betrayed, surprised, and seized on in their beds, but there were not above fourscore of the Castle foot taken; the rest hid themselves, and privately stole away, some into the country, some by night came up to the Castle and got in, in disguises, by the river side."¹ Retiring from the town, the Cavaliers built a fort at the Trent bridge, and were only beaten out of it after an assault of four days' duration. On another occasion Prince Rupert, having raised the siege of Newark, prepared to march against Nottingham. The governor flooded

¹ "Memoirs of Colonel Hutchinson."

the meadows, strengthened the fort at the Trent bridge, and was even "compelled to let the work go forward on the Sabbath day." So desperate was the position of Colonel Hutchinson that few were willing to come to his assistance. "Indeed, such a blow had been given to the Parliament interests in these parts, that the most zealous friends were much cast down, and gave up all for lost; so that the whole burden fell upon the shoulders of Colonel Hutchinson, whose office and honour no man coveted."¹ The Parliamentary forces had quitted Lincoln, Gainsborough, and Sleaford. Prince Rupert turned his attention to Nottingham, determined either to capture or fire the town. Colonel Hutchinson remained undaunted. "I never engaged myself in the service," he wrote to the commissioners at Newark, "with respect to the success or actions of other places, so though the whole kingdom were quit besides this town, yet I would maintain it so long as I was able, and I trust God will preserve it in my hands; but if it perish, I am resolved to stand by it to the last, and bury myself in its ruins, being confident that God would after vindicate me to have been a defender and not a destroyer of my country."² The distance from Newark was only twenty miles. The advance of the Royalist troops began. Prince Rupert was within three miles of Nottingham. It seemed as if nothing could save the town. But just at the last moment the Prince was obliged, by the

¹ Orange's "History of Nottingham."

² "Memoirs of Colonel Hutchinson."

command of the King, to go instantly to his relief at Oxford. Nottingham was saved, and although this was by no means the end of fighting, yet the close of the civil war found the defenders of the Castle unconquered. In 1651 Colonel Hutchinson procured an order from Parliament for merging the garrison in the marching army, and for demolishing the Castle. When Cromwell returned from Worcester at the head of his army, and saw the Castle pulled down, "he was heartily vext at it, and told Colonel Hutchinson that if he had been there when it was voted, he should not have suffer'd it. The colonel replied, that he had procur'd it to be done, and believ'd it to be his duty to ease the people of charge, when there was no more need of it."

The inauguration of the Commonwealth was the dawn of a new era of religious freedom. Cromwell was in favour of the fullest liberty of conscience. He refused to force his own ecclesiastical polity on the nation. "I cannot interfere," said he, "with men's consciences; my office as civil magistrate is only to keep the peace." The declaration of the Council of State in 1653 on the subject of religion was to the following effect:—"that none be compelled to conform to the public religion by penalties or otherwise; but that endeavours be used to win them by sound doctrine, and the example of a good conversation"; and that "such as profess faith in God by Jesus Christ, though differing in judgment from the doctrine, worship, or discipline publicly held forth, shall not be restrained from, but shall

be protected in, the profession of their faith and exercise of their religion, so as they abuse not this liberty to the civil injury of others, and to the actual disturbance of the public peace on their part, provided this liberty be not extended to Popery or Prelacy, or to some such as, under a profession of Christianity, hold forth and practise licentiousness." Although Prelacy, from which the country had suffered so much, was excluded from the promise of protection, yet "in many parts of the kingdom the reading of the Book of Common Prayer, although contrary to law, was tolerated. The few who left the Church were mercifully dealt with. They were not deprived of all means of living." Presbyterians, Independents, and Baptists were associated as "Triers," whose business it was to purge the pulpits of the profane and ignorant. The Presbyterians, who had done their utmost to force their own system on the nation, were allowed, under Cromwell, to promulgate their view. The Quakers, who were fiercely persecuted by the Presbyterians and Independents, did not appeal in vain to the great Protector. After his meeting with Fox, to whom he said that he wished him no more ill than he did to his own soul, all Quakers were ordered to be liberated from prison. Cromwell was ahead of his time. Episcopalians and Presbyterians, Independents and Baptists, were included in his Established Church. The modern doctrine of toleration had then been reached by few. It was inevitable that the old persecuting spirit should linger in the breasts of many who had inherited

the traditions of the past. For centuries it had been held that heresy should be punished by death. And if many of Cromwell's supporters failed to show his spirit, it must for ever remain the glory of the Protectorate that the high-water mark of religious freedom was reached, and that in Cromwell's time no one appealed in vain for liberty of conscience.

CHAPTER III

BEGINNINGS OF THE CHURCH

LITTLE is known of the Independents in Nottingham prior to the proclamation of toleration in 1653. Hooper, the clever engineer at the Castle in 1643, who "understood all kinds of operations in almost all things imaginable," was an Independent ; but he was the victim of so much persecution that on the advice of Colonel Hutchinson he left the town. Lawrence Collin, the master gunner at the Castle, was also an Independent. When the garrison was disbanded in 1651 he, though a stranger, resolved to remain in Nottingham and carry on his former occupation of wool-combing. He made an appeal to Cromwell to protect him from the disturbance which he feared he might suffer from the Corporation because he was not a freeman. The following letter secured his position in the town :—"His Highness, the Lord Protector, having heard the petition of Lawrence Collin, which is here enclosed, is pleased to recommend unto you to speak to the mayor and other magistrates of Nottingham, to know the reason why they will not suffer the petitioner to set up his trade in the town ; and if there be no other cause of exception, but that he is not a freeman, in regard he

has faithfully served the Commonwealth, His Highness does think it fit that he should continue in the town, and be admitted to follow his calling for the maintenance of himself and family." The names of his descendants appear in some of the early subscription lists of Castle Gate Church, and one of them, Abel Collin, was the founder of Collin's Almshouses. While there were a considerable number of Independents in the town during the civil war, there is no evidence that they formed themselves into a gathered Church. The Presbyterians were by far the stronger body, and they, equally with the Episcopalians, insisted on conformity, and gave no quarter to "the New England way." In an ordinance drawn up by the Presbyterian members of Parliament in 1648 for the punishment of blasphemy and heresies, Independency was classed with Anabaptism, Socinianism, and Scepticism, under the head of "Error of heresy and schism." Fortunately the ordinance was not passed into law, but the fact that it was pushed forward showed that the Independents were not likely to enjoy freedom while Presbyterianism was in the ascendant.

To 1655, the third year of Cromwell's Protectorate, we trace the beginning of Castle Gate Church. For our information we depend on the Church Book, a manuscript folio volume of four hundred and forty pages, in which minutes have been recorded for nearly two hundred years. During the first period of the Church's history the proceedings were recorded in narrative form by a deacon named John Maddey.

Mr. Maddey "seems to have first become connected with the Church between the years 1678 and 1682. This is inferred, because from that date the narrator speaks ordinarily in the first person. Instead of telling us of what 'they' did, and of 'their' state, as he usually does before, his style changes, and he speaks of what 'we' did, and of 'our' state."¹ The writer, therefore, became associated with the Church probably thirteen or fourteen years after its formation, and his statement may be considered reliable. In the first sentence of the Church Book, entitled—"An account of the Rise, Progress, and Proceedings of the Congregational Church at Nottingham," Mr. Maddey says: "There was a Church gathered here, in and about Nottingham, about the year 1655, before the revolution upon King Charles II.'s coming in; but after that change they were scattered. Their pastor driven from them, and other considerable members dead and gone, they became a destitute people." In this brief record many things are left unwritten which we should like to know. It tells that the Church had a pastor who was "driven away" when Charles II. came to the throne, and an arrogant Episcopacy again became dominant in the land, but it fails to give his name. The writer of the Historical Notices in the Bi-Centenary Historical Account conjectures that the minister was "Mr.

¹ "An Historical Account of the Congregational Church worshipping in Castle Gate Meeting House, Nottingham, published at the Bi-Centenary of the Church."

Thomas Palmer, who, according to the 'Memoirs of Colonel Hutchinson,' was a minister in the town as early as 1643," and gives us the following account of his career. At that time, owing to the unsettled state of the district, from the vicinity of the Royalist forces, this Mr. Palmer laid aside his ministerial avocations, in part at least, in favour of the military profession. He became captain of a troop of horse in the service of the Commonwealth, and in this character was for some time quartered at Broxtowe. From a book published, as appears, by the same person sixteen years after, namely in 1659, we learn that "God had (then) taken him from rough employment in the wars of England" to preach the Gospel. In order to superintend the publication of his book, Mr. Palmer appears to have sojourned for a while in London. He dedicates his work, which is called "A Little View of this Old World," to "the Council of State of the Commonwealth of England"; and it is dated "from his lodging upon London Bridge, the 4th month, 1659." At this time he describes himself as "Pastor of a Church of Christ at Nottingham." This title was more likely to be used by an Independent than a Presbyterian—even if the latter body had not been, as it then was, in possession of the three parish churches of this town, and of the majority of those throughout the kingdom. It is very probable that "the Church of Christ at Nottingham," of which, in 1659, this individual was pastor, is that which afterwards assembled at Castle Gate. The Church was gathered, according to our

Church Book, in 1655. "It may have been *then* that Mr. Palmer quitted the military profession to resume the duties of a stated pastorate; and he may be the person who was 'driven away' when, at the return of the Stuarts, intolerance again reared its head."¹

The account of Captain Palmer, which Mrs. Hutchinson furnishes in the Memoirs, is far from favourable. He joined Colonel Hutchinson's forces in 1643, at a time when all the horse had been drawn out of Nottingham to the relief of Gainsborough, and the Royalists of Newark took advantage of the depleted garrison by plundering the country right up to the walls of Nottingham. "Upon which," says Mrs. Hutchinson, "some godly men offered themselves to bring in their horses and form a troope for the defence of the country, and one Mr. Palmer, a minister, had a commission to be their captain. This man had a bold, ready, earnest way of preaching, and liv'd holily and regularly, as to outward conversation, whereby he got a greate reputation among the godly, and this reputation swell'd his spiritt, which was very vaine-glorious, covetous, contentious, and ambitious."² He so insinuated himself into the good graces of these godly men that they wished him to be their captain. "Yett would have it believ'd that it was rather prest upon him, than he prest into it."² Concealing his own vehement desire, he asked Colonel Hutchinson whether he should

¹ Castle Gate Bi-centenary Volume. *

² "Memoirs of Colonel Hutchinson."

refuse or accept the command. The colonel and his wife told him "that having entered into a charge of another kind, they thought it was not fitt to engage in this," and advised him to go with the men as chaplain rather than captain. He went away saying he would advise the men to accept this suggestion, but returned declaring that they would not be content unless he accepted the commission. The governor allowed him to accept, and entertained him with the same freedom and kindness as before, "but the man, being guilty of the avarice and ambition of his owne heart, never after that lookt upon the governor with a cleare eie, but sought to blow up all factions against him, whenever he found opportunity, and in the meane time dissembled it as well as he could."¹ The next picture is most unlovely. The governor brought in a number of prisoners, and filled the chapel and a dungeon called the Lion's Den, and "the new Captain Palmer and another minister, having nothing else to doe, walk'd up and down the Castle yard, insulting and beating the poore prisoners as they were brought up."¹ Seeing three of the prisoners sorely cut the governor's wife bound up and dressed their wounds. Captain Palmer coming in, told her, "his soule abhorr'd to see this favour to the enemies of God."¹ The captain's wrath boiled over when the governor invited to supper one of the prisoners, a man of good position, who was related to him by marriage. Captain Palmer "could scarce eate his supper for grieve," and "bellow'd

¹ "Memoirs of Colonel Hutchinson."

lowdly" against the governor, "as a favourer of malignants and Cavaliers."¹ In the following year Captain Palmer instigated all the ministers in the town, and certain loose malignant priests, to petition the committee to turn certain honest, obedient, and peaceful commoners out of the town for being Separatists. Next we find him, with certain accomplices, sending a petition to Parliament accusing the governor and his brother of treachery. And "they had divided the spoil," says Mrs. Hutchinson, "before they caught the lions." In the belief that they would turn out the governor and all his friends they had allotted the commands to themselves. "Millington's sonne was design'd to be governor of the Castle. . . . White, collonell of the horse regiment, and Palmer, the priest, his major."¹ On the Governor's return from London, where he had satisfied the Parliamentary Committee, his accusers, with Palmer in their midst, fled from the town. After a short time they seem to have returned, for the last notice of Palmer in Mrs. Hutchinson's Memoirs is to the following effect. Under Sir Thomas Fairfax, Poyntz had been made major-general of the northern counties. About the end of the summer of 1645 "Poyntz came to Nottingham with all the horse that could be gathered in the neighbouring counties. . . . when he marcht out, Palmer, the priest, not daring to venture himselfe in the field, layd downe his commission when he saw that there was now no connivance to be found at disobeying commands."¹

¹ "Memoirs of Colonel Hutchinson."

The available evidence is scarcely sufficient to enable us with any degree of assurance to say that Captain Palmer was the first minister of the gathered Church. Several questions are left unanswered. How did Captain Palmer spend the ten years between the laying down of his commission and the beginning of the Church? If he became a minister of an Independent Church in the town is it likely that Mrs. Hutchinson, whose Memoirs are continued till 1664, would have failed to give some hint of it? Mrs. Hutchinson tells us that "at the instigation of Captaine Palmer, all the ministers in towne, and, to make the crie louder, certeine loose mallignant priests, which they had gotten to joyne with them," had most violently urged in a petition to the committee that Colonel Hutchinson's cannoneers should be "turn'd out of the towne for being Separatists." Is it reasonable to suppose that a man who showed such fiery zeal to get rid of Separatists should himself have become the minister of a Separatist Church? In the Dictionary of National Biography it is stated that the author of "A Little View of this Old World" was a Thomas Palmer, who after probably serving as a soldier to Skipper's regiment, became vicar or perpetual curate of St. Laurence-Pountney in November, 1644. In 1646 he was presented by the Westminster Assembly to the rectory of Ashton-upon-Trent in Derbyshire. He attended meetings of the Nottingham Presbyterian classis in 1658 and 1659. Ejected from the rectory in 1660, he afterwards wandered about the

country, preaching and fanning "the flames of rebellion." In 1663 he was imprisoned at Nottingham for preaching at conventicles. He was specially mentioned in the King's Proclamation of 10th November, 1663, for "the Discovery and Apprehension of Divers Trayterous Conspirators," but escaped to London. In 1666 he is said to have gone to Ireland "to do mischief." If this Thomas Palmer was the writer of "A Little View," the only scrap of evidence identifying the name of Palmer with the Nottingham Independents seems to disappear, for it is very unlikely that, in the state of feeling which prevailed at the time, an Independent minister should attend the Presbyterian classis. One is therefore constrained, however reluctantly, to conclude that the evidence does not lead to an assured result. In the absence of definite records the name of the first minister must, for the present, be left undetermined.

Of the congregation during the period of the Protectorate, we know nothing. It is almost certain that the majority of the Puritans would be content with the services at St. Mary's, of which the Rev. J. Whitlock became vicar in 1651, or St. Peter's, where the Rev. John Barrett ministered from 1655. Both of those men were Presbyterians, with deep evangelical sympathies. It has to be remembered also that those who dissented from the principle of an Established Church were, until the Commonwealth, a mere handful of people, while many Independents were satisfied to belong to the comprehensive Establish-

ment of Cromwell's time. The founders of Castle Gate Church, probably few in number, belonged to the most advanced type of Independents, and claimed to be free from all external control, whether of magistrate, bishop, presbytery, synod, or assembly. The strength of Independency at this time may be judged from the fact that, in 1658, the Savoy Conference was attended by "more than two hundred ministerial and other delegates from a hundred Independent churches established throughout England and Wales." The foremost men among the Independents were Goodwin, and Owen. Cromwell himself was probably the most far-seeing man among them, and had he lived longer might have given complete effect to Vane's assertion that "the province of the magistrate is this world and man's body; not his conscience, or the concerns of eternity." One would like to think that in passing through the town Cromwell was an occasional worshipper with his brethren who founded Castle Gate Church. And if Colonel Hutchinson and his cultured wife, who became Baptists, did not identify themselves with the cause, it is hoped that their charm of manner and beauty of life were more characteristic of the Independents than the sourness and melancholy which the enemies of Puritanism delight to pourtray. The influence of the governor and his wife cannot have failed to be a blessing to the town. Mrs. Hutchinson thus speaks of her husband: "He was as kind a father, as dear a brother, as good a master, as faithful a friend as the

world had."¹ "He had a loving and sweet courtesy to the poorest, and would often employ many spare hours with the common soldiers and poorest labourers."² In Green's estimation, one of the greatest things which Puritanism contributed to the life of England was the conception of social equality. "Their common calling, their common brotherhood in Christ, annihilated in the mind of the Puritans that overpowering sense of social distinctions which characterized the age of Elizabeth. The meanest peasant felt himself ennobled as a child of God. The proudest noble recognized a spiritual equality in the poorest saint." For five peaceful years the little company of Independents in Nottingham had the opportunity of worshipping together and of revealing to their neighbours the beauty of brotherhood in Christ. Then came the Restoration—and persecution.

¹ "Memoirs of Colonel Hutchinson."

² *Ibid.*

CHAPTER IV

THE FIERY FURNACE

ON 3rd September, 1658, Oliver Cromwell breathed his last. The passing of the great Protector sounded the death-knell of the Commonwealth. Cromwell's son, Richard, was too feeble to hold the reins which his father was understood to have committed to him with his dying breath. In less than two years, by the co-operation of the Presbyterians—who hated Cromwell because he thwarted their desire for ecclesiastical ascendancy—with the Royalists, who were the avowed enemies of the Commonwealth, Charles II. ascended the throne, amid the plaudits of the multitude. The country had not been ripe for Cromwell's great political experiment. Abroad, the name of England had never stood higher in the councils of the nations; at home, a measure of religious liberty, hitherto unknown, was enjoyed. But the nation forgot the glories of the Commonwealth in the debauch of the Restoration. Charles I. was now proclaimed the Martyr King, and several of the judges who condemned him were hanged and quartered. The Independents were driven from every position of trust and power in State and Church. Insult, hatred, ridicule, and persecution

were their daily portion. The moral life of the nation was undermined. "Godliness became a byword of scorn ; sobriety in dress, in speech, in manners, was flouted as a mark of the detested Puritanism. . . . Duelling and raking became the marks of a fine gentleman ; and grave divines winked at the follies of honest fellows, who fought, gambled, swore, drank, and ended a day of debauchery by a night in the gutter . . . and in mere love of what was vile, in contempt of virtue and disbelief of purity or honesty, the King himself stood ahead of any of his subjects."¹

In the memoirs of Colonel Hutchinson we have a vivid picture of the state of Nottingham immediately before the return of Charles. "The towne of Nottingham," says Mrs. Hutchinson, "as almost all the rest of the island, began to grow mad, and declare themselves so, in their desires of the King. The boys, set on by their fathers and masters, gott drummes and colours, and marcht up and downe the towne, and train'd themselves in a millitary posture, and offer'd many affronts to the souldiers of the armie that were quarter'd there ; which were two troopes of Colonel Hacker's regiment. In so much that one night there were about forty of the soldiers hurt and wounded with stones, upon the occasion of taking away the drummes, when the youths were gathering together to make bonfires to burn the rump, as the custome of those mad days was. The soldiers, provoked to a rage, shott againe, and kill'd in the scuffle two Presbyterians, whereof one was an

¹ Green's "Short History of the English People."

elder and an old professor, and one that had bene a greate zealott for the cause, and master of the magazine of Nottingham Castle. He was only standing at his owne doore, and whether by chance or on purpose shott, or by whom, it is not certeine; but true it is that at that time the Presbyterians were more inveterately bitter against the fanatiques, than even the Cavaliers themselves, and they sett on these boyes. But upon the killing of this man they were hugely enraged, and pray'd very seditiously in their pulpitts, and began openly to desire the King; not for goodwill neither to him, but for destruction to all the fanatiques. . . . Upon this bustle in the towne of Nottingham, the soldiers were horribly incens'd, and the townsmen ready to take part with the boyes; whereupon the soldiers drew into the meadowes near the towne, and sent for the regiment, resolving to execute their vengeance on the towne, and the townsmen again were mustering to encounter them. Mrs. Hutchinson by chance coming to the towne, and being acquainted with the captains, persuaded them to do nothing in a tumultuary way, however provok'd, but to complain to the generall, and let him decide the businesse."¹

After the return of Charles II. events marched rapidly. The Presbyterians had received from him at Breda the assurance of "liberty to tender consciences, and that no man shall be disquieted or called in question for differences of opinion in matters of religion which do not disturb the peace of the

* "Memoirs of Colonel Hutchinson,"

kingdom." They looked forward to a new National Church in which they might retain their livings and regain their power. They were ready to accept a revised liturgy and a modified form of Episcopacy, and they regarded Charles "as the person born to be under God the centre of their concord." They were soon undeceived. The new Parliament of 1661 was almost entirely composed of Cavaliers. The Presbyterians were represented by only fifty members. In the new House of Commons few remembered the days of the Stuart tyranny that led to the civil war and the establishment of the Commonwealth. "Their very bearing was that of wild revolt against the Puritan past." Pepys calls them "the most profane, swearing fellows that ever I heard in my life." The Presbyterians were included in the hatred of everything Puritan. The Solemn League and Covenant was burned by the common hangman. The Episcopalians, who now had the upper hand, were determined to make the most of their opportunity. The army was disbanded, and therefore they had nothing to fear from the Independents. Their chief opponents were the Presbyterians, and to them they determined to concede nothing. In the Savoy Conference between Episcopalians and Presbyterians, the Prayer Book was made more, and not less, objectionable to the latter. In 1661 was passed the Corporation Act, the first of the long succession of persecuting Acts which form the darkest blot in the history of the English Church. It was aimed chiefly at the Presbyterians, whom it sought to drive from

their posts in the corporations of the boroughs. According to this Act, every municipal officer was required to take the following oath:—"I do declare and believe that it is not lawful, upon any pretence whatsoever, to take arms against the King," &c., while every magistrate was obliged to take the sacrament "according to the rites of the Church of England" within one year of his election. Bad as it was, however, the Corporation Act gave only a slight indication of what was to follow. The final blow fell with the passing of the Act of Uniformity in May, 1662. This Act compelled every minister of the Church of England (which, under the Commonwealth, included Presbyterians and Independents as well as Episcopalians) publicly, on "some Lord's Day before the Feast of Saint Bartholomew," to say, "I do hereby declare my unfeigned assent and consent to all and everything contained and prescribed in and by the book entitled 'The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments, and other rites and ceremonies of the Church, according to the use of the Church of England, together with the Psalter or Psalms of David, pointed as they are to be sung or said in churches, and the form and manner of making, ordaining, and consecrating of bishops, priests, and deacons.'" All who refused to take this oath were to be deprived of their livings. Those who continued to preach while refusing to conform became liable to imprisonment. Even the refuge of teaching was denied them, as no one was allowed to become a schoolmaster or private tutor

without a licence from a bishop. Moreover, the Act demanded, under a penalty of 100*l.*, the re-ordination of all who had not been episcopally ordained before. On St. Bartholomew's Day, 24th August, this cruel Act came into operation. It was meant to crush all opposition to the Church of England and sweep Puritanism from the face of the land. It really resulted in the revival of Puritanism, and in the severance of the Church of England "from the general body of the Protestant Churches, whether Lutheran or Reformed." "The Church of England stood from that moment isolated and alone among all the Churches of the Christian world." The Act which was meant to destroy Puritanism led to a new and glorious assertion of religious liberty. Two thousand ministers, "the most learned and the most active of their order," refused to submit. Rather than violate conscience, they left their churches and their homes, and went out with their families to face, if need be, beggary, persecution, imprisonment, death. Their sufferings were heart-rending. "Some lived on little more than brown bread and water; many had but eight or ten pounds a year to maintain a family, so that a piece of flesh has not come to their tables in six weeks' time; their allowance could scarce afford them bread and cheese. One went to plough six days, and preached on the Lord's Day. Another was forced to cut tobacco for a livelihood." According to Baxter, some had "neither house nor bread," and those who pitied them "durst not be known to help them."

This, however, was only the beginning of woes. Driven from their churches and their homes, deprived of the means of livelihood by teaching, the Dissenters were not even allowed the consolation of meeting together to worship God in their own way. The fury of the persecuting Churchmen broke out anew in the passing of the Conventicle Act in May, 1664. It was not enough to persecute ministers; the people must also suffer. Hence the Conventicle Act decreed that any person attending a religious meeting of more than five, for worship other than that of the Prayer Book, was to be imprisoned three months for the first offence, six months for the second, and to be transported to some foreign plantation for the third. If he returned from banishment the punishment was death.

One more horrible instrument of persecution was devised in the Five Mile Act of 1665. This Act provided that no Nonconformist minister should go within five miles of any borough or of any place where he had formerly been wont to preach. Thus were the Dissenting ministers driven from their flocks and their homes to a bitter struggle with poverty, while the people were denied, not only the comfort of their ministrations, but the solace of meeting for united worship.

For six and twenty years the cruel persecutors continued to carry out their wretched work. Prisons were filled, and men whose only crime was preaching the Gospel were compelled to associate with the worst criminals. Hundreds were banished to the

West Indian plantations. Those who escaped imprisonment and banishment were the victims of all kinds of lesser evils. They were hooted by the mob and jeered at by the players. Their meetings were broken up, and a crowd of informers grew up who made a trade of discovering their places of worship. Yet the great majority of the persecuted stood firm. Presbyterians and Independents were drawn together by their common sufferings, and their constancy secured, for all succeeding ages, freedom to worship God according to the dictates of conscience.

How did it fare with the Independents of Nottingham during the reign of Charles II.? Mrs. Hutchinson tells a story which illustrates the attitude of the chief magistrate. "Mr. Palmer, a certain nonconformist preacher, was taken at his own house in Nottingham by the maior of the towne, for preaching upon the Lord's Day, and some others with him, and put into the towne's jayle, where they continued about two or three months. There being a grated windowe in the prison, that was almost even with the ground, and look'd into the streete, all people coming by might see these poore people, kept in a damp ill-favour'd roome, where they patiently exhort'd and chear'd one another. One Lord's Day, after sermon-time, the prisoners were singing a psalme, and the people as they passed up and downe, when they came to the prison, stood still, till there was a grate many gather'd about the windowe at which Mr. Palmer was preaching; whereupon the maior, one Toplady, who had formerly

bene a parliament officer, but was now a renegado, came violently with his officers, and beate the people, and thrust some into prison that were but passing the streetes, kickt and pincht the men's wives in his rage, and was the more exasperated when some of them told him how ill his fury became him, who had once bene one of them. The next day, or few days after, having given order the prisoners should every Lord's Day after be lockt in the colehouse, he went to London and made information, I heard oath, to the councell, that a thousand of the country came in armed to the towne, and marcht to the prison window, to hear the prisoner preach; whereupon he procur'd an order for a troope of horse to be sent downe to quarter at Nottingham to keep the fanatiques in awe. But one who knowing this to be false certified to the contrary and prevented the troope."¹

A great deal of information about the state of affairs in Nottingham can be gathered from the "Life of the Rev. William Reynolds, for several years Minister of the Gospel in the Church of St. Mary's, Nottingham; by the Rev. John Whitlock, at the same time vicar of the said church." Mr. Whitlock and Mr. Reynolds were ejected from St. Mary's in 1662. At the same time the Rev. John Barrett was ejected from St. Peter's. Whitlock and Reynolds, with their families, removed to Colwick Hall, the seat of Sir John Musters, by whom they were treated with great kindness. In 1665, while still residing at Colwick Hall, they were seized and imprisoned,

¹ "Memoirs of Colonel Hutchinson."

with many others, at the Blackmoor's Head Inn, Nottingham. After twelve weeks' confinement they were released. The passing of the Five Mile Act forced them to leave Sir John's hospitable roof and find a place of residence beyond the prescribed limits. They settled first at Shirebrook. "Here," says Mr. Whitlock, "we lived two years, and frequently went over to Nottingham, when we could with any safety have our meetings; though we could have none then, but very privately and in the night. And when we could not with any safety go over to preach to our people, we made sermons and sent over the notes to them." Truly the Word of God was precious in those days! A congregation grateful for the notes of the minister's sermon! The church thus formed was the first Presbyterian Church in Nottingham, and the predecessor of the present High Pavement Church. Mr. Barrett, the ejected minister of St. Peter's, was associated with Mr. Whitlock and Mr. Reynolds in ministering to the persecuted Presbyterians. From Shirebrook the Presbyterian ministers removed to Mansfield, where they remained till 1687. "During our stay at Mansfield," says Mr. Whitlock, "God gave us (blessed be His name!) many opportunities of going over to our people at Nottingham, though with some intervals, by reason of persecution sometimes breaking out. We usually were with them every fortnight's Lord's day, as my brother Barrett was with them the other Lord's day, assisted by other of our brethren in a stated course." Although these

ministers seem to have been able to carry on a more continuous ministry than many of their brethren, their lot was by no means enviable. Two notes from Deering's "History of Nottingham" will illustrate the dangers to which they were exposed and the privations they endured. "Once after the service of the meeting was over, he (Mr. Barrett) being in danger of being seized and put in prison, he escaped by putting on the clothes of one Mr. Bartley, a gentleman, one of his hearers, who was very like him both in stature and features, and who lived over against the place where Mr. Barrett preached, which was in some malt rooms on the Long Row."¹ From Deering we also learn that the place of meeting for some time was a vault. "On the west side (of the Middle Pavement) stood a house, formerly called Vout Hall, once the mansion house of the family of the Plumptres. It had its name from the very large vaults which were under it, where, in the time of the Staple of Calais, great quantities of wool used to be lodged. In one of these vaults, in the reign of Charles II., the dissenters privately met for the exercise of their religion; as they did after the Act of Toleration publicly, in a house at the upper end of Pilcher Gate, which is since pulled down and a new one built in its room, the property and present mansion house of John Sherwin, Esq. This place, on account of Mr. Whitlock's and Reynolds (displaced ministers of St. Mary's) officiating in it, obtained the bye-name of Little St. Mary's."²

¹ Deering's "History of Nottingham."

² *Ibid.*

Evidence of the harassed condition of the Dissenters is to be found in the returns made by the clergy in response to the command of the King and the Privy Council, sent through the Archbishop of Canterbury, "to make enquiry after conventicles or unlawful meetings under pretence of religion and the worship of God, by such as separate themselves from the unitie and uniformitie of the Church." In pursuance of this command, the Rev. Dr. Harcourt, Archdeacon of Nottingham, issued a letter to his clergy in 1669, in which he required answers to the following questions :—

"1st. What and how many conventicles, unlawful assemblies, or church meetings are held in your town and parish ?

"2nd. What number of persons do usually frequent those meetings, and of what sort or condition of people do they consist ?

"3rd. From whom, and upon what hopes they look for indemnitie ?

"4th. At whose houses they usually meet, and who are their speakers ?"

In response to these enquiries, the following reply from Normanton shows the avidity with which some of the clergy entered into the spirit of their superiors. "Sir,—According to the directions received from Mr. Archdeacon, I here present accompt of the quæries propounded in his letter: the first of which was, What and how manie conventicles, unlawful assemblies, and church meetings are held in our parish? To which I answer, one everie Lord's day. The

second quærie was, What numbers of persons doe usuallie frequent those meetings, and of what sort or condition of people they consist? To which I answer, They are sometimes in number an 150 persons or thereabout, and for the condition of them, I take them to bee of the lowest and meanest of the people, such as Jereboam made priests of.

“The third quærie was, From whome and upon what hopes they look for indemnitie? To this I cannot answer punctuallie; but hitherto they have bin kept indemnified by the indulgence and connivance of the civil magistrate, whose forbearance to punish is the spawn from which are bred these Egyptian frogs that are crept into everie corner of the nation, and in a short time will not onelie cover the face of the earth but craule into our king’s chambers. And as for indemnitie, I am confident they expect none, nor protection from any; only the power of ecclesiasticall courts being maimed and disabled, they assume the power to themselves to withhold the Churches rights; and the non-payment of tithes is and will be a great inducement to the maior part of men to become sectaries.

“The fourth quærie was, at whose houses they usuallie meete, and who are their speakers? To which I answer, that the place of their meetings in my parish is Gresthorpe Hall, to which one Robert Shawe is tennant, and the sole entertainer of this factious and seditious crewe. Their constant speaker is William Smith, of Bestthorpe, who, though a prisoner, is yet permitted by Robert White

the gaoler, to goe where he pleaseth to sowe the seedes of schisme, faction and sedition in most parts of the countrie. Sir, having thus answered the Archdeacon's proposalls as trulie and faithfullie as I can, I take leave to rest, sir, your servant,

"JOHN HEWES."¹

"NORMANTON,

"9th of August, 1669."

Clearly, if John Hewes had possessed the power he would have made short work of the Dissenters.

From the Castle Gate Church Book we learn that during the persecution the Church was scattered. "Their pastor driven from them, and other considerable members dead and gone, they became a destitute people." In their desolate condition they sought union with the Independent Church at Sutton-in-Ashfield, where Mr. James, who was sent forth by a Church in London, had gathered a small congregation. Mr. James lived at Flintham, a distance of about twelve miles from Nottingham, and used his own house as a place of worship for those to whom he ministered. For many years the three congregations of Nottingham, Flintham, and Sutton were under his guidance. The Independents were thus at a great disadvantage as compared with the Presbyterians of Nottingham. Two pen portraits of Mr. James have come down to us. One is from the return made by the Vicar of Flintham to the enquiries of the Archbishop in regard to Conventicles.

¹ "Early Presbyterianism in Nottingham,"

The account states "that there were no Quakers or Papists in the parish, but they had Anabaptists and Independents in considerable numbers. Among the principal of these (continues the return) was Mr. John James, a dangerous seducer from the Church of England. At his house the meetings of the conventicles are generally held. He is a considerable farmer in the town, holding under Trinity College, Cambridge, as does likewise two or three other of the Separatists. Another of the houses at which the conventicles are held is that of William Bradley, who is sometimes an expounder. The pride of a schismaticke I find impenetrable; nor will any of them promise me to forbear their meetings. The persons above alluded to, with nearly a score more, and their families, were all excommunicated by the Rev. Pastor Edward Guy, but, as he admits, without any effect of bringing them to a sense of their duty."¹ The other portrait of this "dangerous seducer" who refused to conform is to be found in Castle Gate Church Book. "He was a person of great holiness and ministerial abilities, and God owned him abundantly, and used him as an instrument of bringing many souls over to Jesus Christ, and building up such as (through grace) believed in the pure truths of the Gospel. For he was a great preacher of the free grace of God through Jesus Christ, and did press and promote holiness from Gospel principles, with great clearness and efficacy. He was persecuted and

¹ Bailey's "Annals of Nottinghamshire."

often imprisoned, but still he kept on his work when at liberty; and when under restraint he manifested his care and faithfulness to Christ and the Church, as appears by the many letters he wrote to establish and encourage them in the ways of God, notwithstanding the sufferings they did and were like to meet withal.”¹ Surely a beautiful exhibition of pastoral fidelity and zeal in a time of danger! And as illustrating the faithfulness of God to those who faithfully serve Him, it may be mentioned that there has been a preacher of the free grace of God in every generation of Mr. James’s descendants for two hundred years. A specially severe persecution by some justices at last drove him from his flock. Twice he suffered imprisonment—at Nottingham for seventeen months, and at Newark for the long period of six years. In Palmer’s Nonconformist’s Memorial, originally written by Dr. Calamy, we find the following account of his sufferings: “He was hurried to Nottingham Jail, where he lay for seventeen months. He then petitioned Judge Atkins in the circuit, and was released. However, some time after he was seized on again, and clapped up in Newark Jail, where he lay about six years, and could obtain no release, unless he would promise to give over preaching; which he absolutely refused. His prison, indeed, was tolerably comfortable, through the favour of his keeper, who suffered him to enjoy the company of his friends, and to preach amongst them, both in the prison

¹ Castle Gate Church Book.

and in other houses in the town. His confinement continued till the Indulgence of 1672. Afterwards falling into the same sin of preaching, he was informed against, and warrants were granted to seize his goods, which was done with such vigour that they left him not a stool to sit on. They broke open house, stable, and barns, and took away whatever they met with; and they did it in so furious a manner as to fright three children into convulsions; and one of them, six years old, died in a night or two after. He lost to near the value of 500*l.* in goods and cattle." As the result of these persecutions his body was worn with toil and "could not bear riding about as he had done." A broken man, he went to London, where, after some time, he became pastor of a Church at Wapping, and there spent the remainder of his days. His loss was deeply felt by the scattered Church. "The Church was very unwilling to have parted with him, for he was both excellent in his ministry, and of a holy and sweet conversation, so that parting with him went very near to many. But all things considered, it did appear that the providence of God did call him elsewhere, and, therefore, they could no longer resist."

In his sermon on the occasion of the bi-centenary commemoration, the Rev. Samuel McAll thus pictures the condition of the Church during the period of persecution under the ministry of Mr. James. "He pays a stolen visit to the 'saints and faithful brethren' residing here. The news of his coming spreads

amongst them. In some sequestered place, as an upper room, or a rock cellar, the Church is to meet for worship. The hour is to be long after the inhabitants have closed in for the night, and retired for rest; or it is as early as two or three in the morning. Through the dark and murky streets the little band begins to gather towards the spot, by companies of two or three at the most, lest suspicion be aroused. They enter with cautious steps the dimly lighted place. Friends greet each other in silence—an awe and tenderness resting on the spirits of all. A Psalm is read, for they must not sing; as that would at once arouse informers, and bring upon them the harpies of the law. And now, with full and almost bursting heart, their pastor begins to expound, and pray, and preach. The word of God is precious. It is indeed from the heart and to the heart the good man speaks, telling how martyrs suffered in the olden time, and reminding his hearers that Jesus himself was a ‘a man of sorrows,’ and that ‘there is a rest that remaineth for the people of God.’ As he proceeds in this strain—his lips touched as with a heavenly fire—they realise what is meant by the communion of saints. Their ‘hearts flow together and are enlarged.’ They have meat to eat that the world knows not of. Faith triumphs over nature, and, gathering her trophies from the invisible,

‘Breaks through the clouds of flesh and sense
And dwells in heavenly light.’

“But the assembly is startled! A noise is heard in the street. Is it some troop of foes coming to molest

them . . . or some Bacchanalian company that have overstayed their time? Or, haply, there is a single footstep. Whose was it? Has some spy been watching the little church; or is it some timid disciple that has stolen nigh that he may overhear a worship in which he dare not join? All grows quiet again; and at length it is time for the assembly to break up. Amidst the rawness of the night, and, possibly the winter's severest storm, they must steal away. Short slumbers, sweetened by the remembrance of such a service, shall prove refreshing enough; and in the strength of this spiritual meat they will go many days.

“Or it is Saturday; and it is whispered over their bargains, and as if in casual intercourse, that next day their good pastor is about to preach at Flintham. It is but twelve miles away. Some will ride thither; and the hale and the young do not think it too far to walk. Setting off early, as they who of old ‘went to the sepulchre,’ they may worship twice with the branch Church in yondervillage. Christian hospitality welcomes them, and they come back in the early evening, repeating to each other the precious texts their minister has quoted, and the weighty truths he has advanced. Truly it is such a Sabbath as pilgrims and strangers, men whose home is beyond the skies, may expect to spend!”¹

The next minister, Mr. John Gibbs, who came in 1678, enjoyed a period of comparative freedom from persecution. He is described as a “very holy person,

¹ Castle Gate Bi-centenary Volume.

and of great abilities for the ministry, and laborious in the work of God, and of a useful exemplary conversation. He was of a lovely temper, so that his walk and visiting was very profitable, as well as his ministry. God owned him in his work.”¹ His ministry was, however, of short duration. In the midst of his labours, and after only four years of service, he was removed by death. The lull in the tempest of persecution, during which this gentle man did his brief day’s work, soon came to an end. Scarcely had he been laid to rest when the storm burst. “Persecution began again, and our meetings were disturbed, and we forced to meet as we could in the night, or at two or three in the morning. We were glad of a quiet meeting at any time. We could not always get ministers to help us, but did make use of some in the Church that had gifts to speak a word to edification. Captain Wright, the then elder of the Church, was very useful this way. As he was once exercising among us, he was taken and carried to prison, where he was confined a considerable time—about three months—but was very cheerful under his confinement.”¹ Captain Wright was an officer under Colonel Hutchinson. “He was a person,” says our Castle Gate record, “of a blameless holy walk, and feared God above many, so that he was a credit to religion, and an ornament to the congregation.”

Where, it may be asked, was the meeting place of the Independents in Nottingham? The Presbyterians,

¹ Castle Gate Church Book.

as we have seen, met in a vault on the west side of the Middle Pavement. Our Church Book gives us no information of a similar kind in regard to the Independents. A conjecture, however, which is of intense interest, has been made. When the foundation of our present Sunday School buildings were being dug, a series of remarkable caves were brought to light. They were described by Mr. S. Dutton Walker, F.S.A., in *The Reliquary Quarterly Journal and Review*, and plan and section drawings were given on a scale of eight feet to an inch. The caves thus laid bare consist of three chambers. The largest of these—twenty-seven feet by thirteen—has in it “a Saxon, or very early Norman circular pier, with square capital, and bead on base, with rock arches cut from it to strengthen the roof or ceiling. There are chamfered strings round the walls where the roof of rock springs from.” “The caves are in wonderful preservation, the mouldings, &c., being almost as perfect as the day they were cut, although centuries have since then elapsed.” “The larger chamber has, apparently, been a memorial, or mortuary chapel, and the smaller one a death chamber or vault, though it may have been a prayer chamber or Lady Chapel.” The roof of the caves is eleven feet below the level of the street. “It is possible these underground chapels have been used in past times as places in which worship could be carried on secretly. If this be so, it would account for the depth below the surface at which these and similar places are found.”¹

¹ Mr. Walker's notice in *The Reliquary Quarterly Journal and Review*.

It is certainly not impossible that during the time of persecution the Independents used these caves for a secret place of worship. At any rate, we know that the Church has stood on the same spot above the ground for two hundred and sixteen years, and we may be allowed to suppose that the little congregation of "destitute people" met at the same place underground during the twenty-eight years of suffering and persecution that succeeded the freedom of the Commonwealth.

CHAPTER V

THE REVOLUTION AND THE REMNANT

THE persecution of the Nonconformists which marked the reign of Charles II. was continued under his brother James II. In 1687 James issued the famous Declaration of Indulgence and offered the Nonconformists the liberty for which they longed. All penal laws against them were to be suspended, and all were to enjoy freedom of worship. It was a tempting bait. For twenty-five years Dissenters had been fined, spied upon, imprisoned, banished. Hundreds had died in jail. They were compelled to meet in secret. Their meetings were ruthlessly broken up by soldiers, their leaders dragged like criminals to prison; and they could only think with horror of the continuance of their sufferings. Yet they refused the Indulgence; and by their refusal saved the country at once from Popery, which James sought to establish, and from unconstitutional government, of which the Declaration itself was an illustration. However eagerly they longed for a cessation of persecution, they would not secure it by an overthrow of Protestantism or the establishment of the arbitrary power of the King.

When William of Orange landed in 1688, and

James II. fled before him, a new era dawned in England. In the Declaration of Rights presented to William and Mary on 13th February, 1689, the Houses of Parliament claimed, among other things, liberty for the free exercise of religion by all Protestants, and this claim was embodied in the Toleration Act which came into operation on the 17th May of the same year. The Toleration Act was entitled, "An Act for exempting their Majesty's Protestant subjects dissenting from the Church of England from the penalties of certain laws." The limits of the Act, however, were exceedingly narrow. John Howe appealed to the legislature for a larger measure, and demanded that Dissenters should not be excluded from their share in the management of civil affairs. "We tremble," said he, "to think of the sacramental test brought down as low as to the keeper of an alehouse. . . . Never can there be union or peace in the Christian world till we take down our arbitrary inclosures, and content ourselves with those which our common Lord hath set." Many of the arbitrary enclosures against which Howe protested remained for centuries. Catholics and Unitarians were excluded from the benefits of the Act. The Protestant Dissenters who were included received only a fraction of their rights. They were exempted from attendance at the parish churches, but were still compelled to pay tithes. They were not obliged to conform to the ceremonies of the Church of England, but their ministers were required to subscribe to all the Articles of the Church except

the thirty-fourth, thirty-fifth, thirty-sixth, and part of the twentieth. They were to be protected from disturbance during public worship, but were not entitled to worship in a place which had not been certified before the bishop or archdeacon of the diocese, or a justice of the peace.

Though imperfect and limited, the Act was a great boon at the time. It was at least a step, if a short one, towards that perfect religious liberty which is the right of every human being. Nonconformists all over the country took advantage of its provisions, emerged from their caves, and built houses of prayer. Presbyterians, Independents, and Quakers made remarkable progress. In the two years from 1688 to 1690 seven hundred and ninety-six temporary, and one hundred and forty-three permanent buildings were licensed for public worship. The meeting-houses were for the most part plain and unadorned buildings, yet when we remember how our forefathers, during the lifetime of an entire generation, had been despoiled and harassed, we may well think of their efforts with reverence and regard their buildings as the first-fruits of their desire to use their newly acquired freedom in the worship and service of God.

The revolution was hailed with enthusiasm at Nottingham. Lord Delamere hit upon a curious plan for testing the feeling of the people. The story is thus recorded:—"Lord Devonshire, accompanied by the Earl of Stamford, Lord Howe, and an abundance of the nobility and gentry of the country

resorted to Nottingham (10th November, 1688) where they held frequent meetings at their respective inns. They remained in the town, increasing daily in number till the arrival of Lord Delamere with between four and five hundred horse. This nobleman, who was warmly welcomed by the Convention, quartered at the Feathers Inn, in Wheeler Gate. Meanwhile the populace were unacquainted with the result of the frequent consultations, and Delamere, anxious to ascertain the general feeling, hit upon a happy test. He ordered the trumpets to sound to arms, and raise a cry that the King's forces were within four miles of the borough. Whereupon the whole town was in alarm. Those who had horses were soon mounted, and accoutred with such arms as they possessed. A flood of people on foot, armed with rusty firelocks and pitchforks, rushed in haste to the river. They were told that the passage over the Trent must be secured at all hazards; forthwith the boats at hand were drawn up on the north bank of the stream, and the barricade rendered still more imposing by additions of boards and barrels of every dimension, and a grotesque array of market stalls. This spontaneous enthusiasm gratified Lord Delamere and his party exceedingly, and so the people were after a while undeceived. On the following day, which was Saturday, Devonshire and Delamere, with Lord Howe and many of their friends, went to the Malt Cross, and there harangued the people in favour of the Prince of Orange, who had come to deliver them from popery and slavery. The people shouted

‘ A free Parliament! A free Parliament!’ Lord Delamere then took his departure.”¹

To the handful of Independents, freedom of worship was of still greater consequence than a free Parliament, and we may be sure that while they rejoiced in the overthrow of despotism, their deepest gratitude was stirred by the passing of the Toleration Act. In 1686 the Rev. John Ryther became the minister of the Churches of Sutton and Nottingham. According to the Nonconformist Memorial, he was the son of the Rev. John Ryther, of Sydney College, Cambridge, who was ejected in 1662 from Frodlingham and Bromly in Lincolnshire. The ejected minister afterwards went to London, and preached in Broad Street, Wapping, where he was very popular with the sailors, who on one occasion saved him from arrest. To avoid the persecution to which his father and he were subjected, young Mr. Ryther spent some time as chaplain of merchant ships sailing to the Indies. When he settled in Nottingham in 1686, the persecution had so far abated that he found it desirable to give his whole time to the section of the Church worshipping at Nottingham. The Church was therefore divided, and henceforth the Church at Nottingham and the Church at Sutton pursued their separate ways.

From the Church Book we learn that Mr. Ryther was “a man of great abilities and furniture for the ministry, a great gospel-preacher, and of a holy walk.” He continued in Nottingham for sixteen

¹ “Old and New Nottingham,” by Wylie.

years as "a laborious servant of Jesus Christ, and God used him for convincing and converting sinners, and building the Church of Christ up in the pure doctrine of faith and holiness." Thinking of the "sound and eminent" pastors with whom they had been favoured, our Chronicle says: "We have great cause to be ashamed of our little improvements under them; and therefore God might justly have broken up house with us. The Lord give us a due sense of it for our future humbling and quickening."

On the Declaration of Indulgence by James II. in 1687, Mr. Whitlock and Mr. Reynolds, ejected from St. Mary's, and Mr. Barrett, ejected from St. Peter's, in 1662, returned to town. After the coming of William of Orange and the passing of the Toleration Act, the three Presbyterian ministers and Mr. Ryther, on 16th July, 1689, "conjointly registered places to be used temporarily in worship by their respective adherents. The Presbyterians registered some rooms in Bridlesmith Gate, while the Independents found a shelter for a brief period in Postern Gate, Middle Pavement." They lost no time, however, in securing permanent places of worship, and the foundation of the first Castle Gate Meeting House was laid on 29th May, 1689, only a few days after the Toleration Act had received the Royal assent. It is thus the oldest building for Nonconformist worship in Nottingham, and it is worthy of note that the Congregational Church has stood on the same site for two hundred and sixteen

years. The summer of 1689 must have been one of unbounded delight to the remnant that survived the persecution, for they saw the walls rising within which they were henceforth to worship God.

It is not to be wondered at that with the recent persecutions fresh in their minds, Nonconformists still had a certain feeling of insecurity, and that they should most frequently choose for the site of their buildings, "some retired street or quiet court apart from the public gaze, lest they should invite popular insult or disturbance, or lest the precious liberty just granted should, by some outbreak of bigotry, be again snatched away from them." An interesting indication of this feeling is to be found in the deed of gift of the ground on which the High Pavement Meeting House was built in 1690 or 1691. One proviso in the deed is to the effect "that if at any time hereafter, by the laws of this realm, the exercise of religion in the way in which it now is or hereafter shall be performed by the people commonly called Presbyterians, shall be prohibited, so as that it shall become unsafe or impracticable to use the said building or meeting-house for the exercise of their religion by the said people for the space of three years, that then power is vested in the trustees to dispose of the property in the way deemed best by them for all so concerned." Happily it has never been found necessary to put the provision into operation, the liberty granted by the Toleration Act never having been recalled.

The Castle Gate meeting-house was a low-tiled

building, with accommodation for probably four hundred and fifty worshippers. Small leaden windows admitted the light. "Two pillars sprang from the floor to support the ceiling. Stairs, rising within the building, led up to a small front gallery." The pews were square and the aisles wide. Over the pulpit was a sounding-board. One of the documents which has been preserved is the balance sheet, under the hand of Mr. Thomas Wright, son of Captain Wright, and treasurer of the building fund. Even the smallest item of expenditure is here accounted for. Thus we find: "To ale and bread for some country men on a wet day, 2s.;" while another entry is as follows: "One going to Bulwell, 4*d*." The painter's bill amounted to 4*l*. 9*s*., and the entire cost of timber was only about 30*l*. For bricks, at 11*s*. per 1,000, they paid about 40*l*. A load of lime cost 7*s*. Eight deal boards for the pulpit cost 14*s*. 8*d*., and the price paid for making it was 30*s*. One man, probably an overseer, received wages at the rate of 1*s*. 6*d*. a day. The majority of the workmen received 8*d*. or 10*d*. a day, while the sawyers worked for 6*d*. The total cost of the meeting-house was 322*l*. 10*s*. 10*d*., viz., 65*l*. for the ground, and 257*l*. 10*s*. 10*d*. for the building. Even if money was four times the present value, the outlay was extremely modest. And yet it was more than could be met at once by the congregation. The subscriptions, which ranged from 2*s*. 6*d*. to 30*l*., only amounted to 193*l*. 11*s*. 6*d*., and hence there was a debt on the building of 128*l*. 19*s*. 4*d*. The subscriptions included material as well as money. One

member contributed lime and bricks, another thirty-two bundles of reeds, and a third one deal board. As indicating the strength of the congregation, it may be mentioned that the subscriptions number eighty-four, and about one-half of them are given by women.

Little more than four months sufficed to complete the simple and unadorned meeting-house, and on the eighth day of October, 1689, it was registered for public worship by the Clerk of the Peace. The registration is as follows: "October 8th, 1689, 'A New House'; the certifier, 'Mr. Ryther'; denomination, 'Protestant Dissenters, Independents.'" Four years afterwards an effort was made to free the building from debt, and a sum of 93*l.* 7*s.* was subscribed. On this occasion contributions are made by fifty-one persons, in sums ranging from 2*s.* 6*d.* to 10*l.* "Several young women" subscribe 4*l.* 8*s.*

Mr. Ryther continued to minister to the Church with great acceptance till God called him from his labours. He lived on the best of terms with the three aged Presbyterians who had returned to Nottingham after a quarter of a century of absence enforced by the Five-Mile Act. Mr. Whitlock gives us two indications of the harmony and co-operation that prevailed. Speaking of their method of conducting the services in the reign of William and Mary, Mr. Whitlock says: "Our people were supplied on Lord's days in the same manner that, as has been before related, they were when we enjoyed

any liberty during our stay at Mansfield, viz., by my brother Reynolds and me every fortnight's Lord's day, and by my brother Barrett, with an assistant, the other Lord's day; and we had, and still, through much mercy have, many week-day opportunities, and constantly a weekly lecture; our and our brother Ryther's congregation joining in attendance thereon, and our brother Ryther and we joining harmoniously, blessed be God, in keeping of it up, with the occasional help of our neighbour ministers, and sometimes of other of our brethren in the ministry whom God providentially sent among us." The second indication of Mr. Ryther's fraternal relations with the Presbyterian ministers is to be found in the fact that during Mr. Reynolds' last illness Mr. Ryther paid him a visit and sought to administer the consolations of grace. "My reverend brother Ryther, visiting him in his sickness, and telling him he hoped he was, with the good old patriarch Jacob, waiting for the salvation of God, he, after some pause, replied to this effect: 'The state of my body is altered, but the state of my mind not at all. The apprehensions I have of the odiousness of sin, the beauty of holiness, the excellency of Christ, the preciousness of faith, are the same as formerly, or rather more growing.'" Mr. Reynolds died in 1697, while Mr. Ryther, to whom he made this beautiful confession of faith, lingered till January 27th, 1704, when he, too, passed into the higher service.

CHAPTER VI

DIFFICULTIES IN QUEEN ANNE'S REIGN

AFTER Mr. Ryther's death Mr. Richard Bateson conducted the services for twelve months before he was called to the pastorate of the Church. After many days of prayer for the guidance of God, and much debate among themselves, the members agreed to give him a unanimous invitation to remain as their pastor. That the decision was a wise one is shown by the following entry in the Church Book: "Since he was chosen and ordained we have had great satisfaction in the leading hand of God in his coming amongst us." Mr. Bateson continued his labours at Castle Gate till 1739, when failing health compelled him to resign the charge he had held for the long period of thirty-four years.

The difficulties of Dissenters, though greatly lessened, were by no means removed by the passing of the Toleration Act of 1689. While they were allowed to meet in peace in their own registered places of worship, they were still subject to serious disabilities. Two of the instruments by which it was hoped to stamp out Nonconformity in the reign of Charles the Second were the Corporation Act of 1661 and the Test Act of 1673. By the former, every

municipal officer was obliged to take the Sacrament "according to the rites of the Church of England" within a year of his appointment. According to the latter, all who held office under the Government, whether civil, naval, or military, were required to take the Sacrament in the English Church. When William became king, he tried in vain to secure the abolition of the persecuting Acts, and the admission of all Protestants to a share in the public service.

During William's reign the High Churchmen were held in check, and Dissenters enjoyed comparative freedom; but at the accession of Anne the Churchmen found a friend, and the Dissenters an enemy, on the throne. Nonconformists had greatly increased in numbers in the last decade of the seventeenth century, and had built hundreds of places of worship all over the country. It now seemed as if all that they had gained might be swept away in a fresh persecution. "Dissenters were everywhere insulted; their ministers could scarcely walk the streets with safety; High Church ballads, all ending with the refrain of "Down with the Presbyterians," were composed, and sung by drunken mobs under newly-erected Maypoles. "Queen Mary's Bonfires" were hinted at for the effectual extirpation of obstinate schismatics; people talked of pulling down the meeting-houses as places that should not be suffered to exist; and at Newcastle-under-Lyme they carried their desire into execution."¹

The Corporation and Test Acts were a great

¹ "History of the Free Churches of England" (Skeats and Miall).

stumbling-block to the Nonconformists. They had either to take the Communion in the parish churches or renounce all the advantages and opportunities of public service. To the Presbyterians these Acts presented less difficulty than to the rest of the Dissenters. Baxter was in favour of a National State Church. Calamy and Howe were of the same mind. Moreover, many of the Presbyterians who had been ejected in 1662 continued occasionally to take the Communion service in the Church they had not ceased to reverence. On the other hand, the Quakers and the Baptists held the most pronounced anti-State-Church principles. "Members of some Baptist Churches were forbidden to enter, on any pretence whatever, the established places of worship." The Congregationalists seem to have held a middle position between the Presbyterians on the one hand and the Quakers and Baptists on the other. Some of them did occasionally conform, but the majority appear to have agreed with their anti-State-Church brethren, and to have held with Cowper that it was a shameful thing to make the

"The symbols of atoning grace
An office-key, a picklock to a place,
That infidels may make their title good
By an oath dipped in Sacramental blood."

Relying on the sympathy of Queen Anne, the High Church party determined, by putting a stop to the practice of occasional conformity, to drive Dissenters from municipal and military office. A Bill for the prevention of occasional conformity was brought

into the House of Commons in 1702, and carried by a large majority. According to this Bill, "not only every admiral, general, judge, alderman, town councillor, or high officer of State, but every common soldier and sailor, every bailiff, every cook and scullery-maid in the Royal household was required to be a member of the Established Church. The Bill further provided that if any person holding such an office should, at any time after receiving his appointment, attend any conventicle or religious meeting, other than one conducted according to the liturgy and practice of the Church of England, he should forfeit the sum of one hundred pounds, and five pounds for every day that he continued in the occupation of his office; and he was at the same time adjudged to be incapable, during the remainder of his life, of holding any public employment."¹

This blow at the Nonconformists was warded off by the House of Lords. In the Upper House the Whigs were in a majority, and the bishops who had been placed in office in King William's time favoured a liberal policy towards Dissenters. So fierce was the contest between the Court and the Commons on the one side, and the House of Lords on the other, that the Queen's husband, Prince George of Denmark, who, as a Lutheran, practised occasional conformity, was compelled to vote for the Bill. While he gave his vote at the Queen's command, he is said to have relieved his feelings, if not his conscience, by exclaiming to one of the opponents of

¹ "History of the Free Churches of England" (Skeats and Miall).

the Bill:—"My heart is vid you!" In spite, however, of popular and regal pressure, the Lords stood firm, and scored the first victory in a battle that was by no means at an end.

In the following year a new Bill was brought into the House of Commons. Its penalties were less severe; its spirit was the same. The Lords threw it out by a large majority. Fierce passions were roused. The clergy, the majority of the Commons, the Court, and the people clamoured for the Bill. The bishops and the Lords stood firm. So keen was the excitement that Swift tells us "the very ladies are split asunder into High Church and Low, and, out of zeal for religion, have hardly time to say their prayers." "The dogs in the streets were much more contumacious and quarrelsome than usual; and the very night before the Bill went up, a committee of Whig and Tory cats had a very warm and loud debate upon the roof of our house."

In 1704 the fight was renewed, but on this occasion the zeal of the High Church party overran their discretion. Thinking to make its passage secure, they tacked it to a Land Tax Bill in the hope that the Lords, who were in favour of the latter, might also accept the former. This crooked policy proved too nauseous even to the Commons, and the attempt to carry the measure was abandoned for seven years.

The general election of 1711 gave the High Churchmen the opportunity they sought. The Tories were in an overwhelming majority. The Whigs, in order to regain power, sacrificed the

Dissenters. The Occasional Conformity Bill was passed without opposition, and "received the Royal assent on the eighth day after its introduction." No one could now hold civil or military office without conforming to the Church of England. To attend a conventicle while in the public service was to forfeit 40*l.*, which was handed over to the informer. This odious Act left three courses open to the Nonconformists. "They could conform; they could cease to attend the public worship of their own body, and commune sufficiently often to save their places; or they could relinquish their offices, and agitate for a repeal of the law." In the first case, the Dissenters would simply be swallowed up; in the second case, the Nonconformist chapels would be robbed of the active support of all who held public office, and occasional conformity would in certain cases lead to complete conformity; in the third case, Nonconformists would, for the future, have no share in the public life of the country. Quakers, Baptists, and the majority of Independents, unhesitatingly followed the third course, and for the sake of freedom renounced position.

A still heavier blow fell in the passing of the Schism Act of 1714. This Act aimed, not at the crippling, but at the destruction of Dissent. "Sectarian intolerance scarcely ever gave birth to a more scandalous proposal." It was resolved to sweep away the schools and training colleges of the Dissenters, and thus compel them either to let their children grow up in ignorance, or

expose them to the influence of the Church of England. No one was allowed to keep a public or private school without a license from the bishop. No license was to be given without conformity to the Established Church. And to teach without a license was to be imprisoned without bail. In the House of Commons the bill was carried by an overwhelming majority; in the House of Lords, in the third reading, by seventy-seven to seventy-two. Queen Anne signed it on 25th June. It was to have come into force on the first of August. The dramatic issue is best illustrated in the following story. "On the morning of that day, Thomas Bradbury, the Congregational minister of Fetter Lane, was walking through Smithfield, when he met Bishop Burnet. Burnet called to him from his carriage, and inquired why he seemed so troubled. 'I am thinking,' replied Bradbury, 'whether I shall have the constancy and resolution of that noble company of martyrs whose ashes are deposited in this place: for I most assuredly expect to see similar times of violence and persecution, and that I shall be called to suffer in a like cause.' The bishop, endeavouring to calm him, informed Bradbury that the Queen had been given over by her physicians, and was expected every hour to die, and that he himself was then on his way to Court. He offered to send a messenger to Bradbury to give him the earliest intelligence of the Queen's death, and arranged that if the messenger should find that minister in his pulpit, he should go into the gallery of Fetter Lane Chapel,

and drop a handkerchief. The Queen died on the same morning; and while Bradbury was preaching, the messenger arrived, and dropped his handkerchief from the front gallery." The preacher made the announcement, proclaimed George the First King, and asked the congregation to sing the eighty-ninth Psalm. The Schism Act died with the Queen. No attempt was made to enforce it. The High Church party had lost their chief supporter. King George promised his protection to the Nonconformists. "Thenceforward the struggle was to be, not for the preservation, but for the extension of freedom." The first instalment of that extension of freedom was secured in 1819, when the Occasional Conformity Act and the Schism Act were repealed.

The Castle Gate records during this period are silent on public events. There is no means of ascertaining how far the members of the Church were affected by the persecuting Acts of Queen Anne's reign. It is highly probable, however, that now, as at a later date, the question of occasional conformity had to be faced by some of them. In the subscription list for the building of the meeting-house in 1689, we find the names of two aldermen, and it is not unlikely that in 1711 the congregation may have contained several to whom the passing of the Occasional Conformity Act meant the abandonment of office, or the desertion of their Church. In any case, the members of the Church, whether directly affected by the Acts or not, must have suffered from the hatred with which all Dissenters

were at that time regarded. Queen and Commons and clergy were supported in their attempts to stamp out Dissent by large numbers of people whose passions were inflamed by the notorious Dr. Sacheverell, whose vulgar abuse of Nonconformists made him the hero of the hour. No other illustration of the trials of Nonconformity at this time is needed than the reception which was given to Defoe's famous tract, "A Short Way with Dissenters." It was published anonymously, and was a daring satire on the relation of High Churchmen to Dissent. The "Short Way" was simply to expatriate all Dissenters, and hang the ministers. Until it became known that the author was a Dissenter, and the pamphlet a satire, many of the High Churchmen received the "Short Way" with enthusiasm. In spite of the persecution and popular hatred of Queen Anne's reign, however, the cause at Castle Gate was maintained, and in the calmer days that followed her death, the congregation so increased as to necessitate the erection of side galleries in the meeting-house. This improvement was carried out in 1727, at a cost of 87*l.* 14*s.* Again, in 1738, the year before Mr. Bateson's resignation, the church was enlarged at a cost of 193*l.* These alterations in the meeting-house show that during Mr. Bateson's long ministry the prosperity of the Church was not only maintained, but increased.

CHAPTER VII

CHURCH DISCIPLINE IN THE EARLY DAYS

FROM the Castle Gate Church Book it appears that our forefathers paid great attention to Church discipline, and strove earnestly to secure purity of communion.* Many interesting and instructive records of discipline are to be found in the minute book. Some may regard these simply as quaint and curious memorials of the past; others will read in them the earnest solicitude of the early Independents that the Church, which is the body of Christ, should as far as possible be kept free from blemish. The custom of recording at length cases of discipline ceased long ago, and it may not be desirable to revive it. At the same time we may well ask whether there is not a call for the revival of that deep interest in the spiritual welfare of those who bear the name of Christ which was so marked a feature in the life of our Churches two hundred years ago.

The illustrations which follow cover a period of one hundred years, and will serve to depict one phase of Congregational Church life during the eighteenth century. They are arranged, not in the order of time, but according to the offences with which

they deal. Instead of the actual names, I insert letters arbitrarily chosen, and in no case do those letters represent the initials of the individual.

The first group of offences illustrate uncontrolled temper—the unguarded use of the tongue. A case occurs in 1714, and is recorded as follows:—"There was one, X. Y., who gave great trouble and disturbance to the Church because of a contentious and proud temper. He treated Mr. Bateson with great contempt and scurrility, and insinuated several things very reproachful and false. We had many meetings with him, for some years together, endeavouring to convince him of his evil, till we were perfectly tired out with him, for his stubborn and litigious temper rendered all in vain, so that we were forced to cast him out. When he was cast out there were three other persons suspended at the same time for countenancing him. These persons with him joined together to set up a distinct meeting, and set up him, the said X. Y., for their preacher; but they soon differed and brake to pieces among themselves, and so their meeting came to nothing." One of the three afterwards signified his desire to return. The Church gave him the following answer: "Brother A., we are willing to receive you amongst us again, hoping you are one whom Christ has received. Only we expect you to make an acknowledgment wherein you have given just offence by your countenancing X. Y., and not joining with the Church in dealing with him for things very sinful on his part, and when a meeting was appointed to discharge ourselves of him you did

not only not join with the Church, but appeared with some warmth in opposition against it. And when we cast him out you did join with him in setting up a distinct meeting and chose him for your minister; which act of yours did justify him and condemn the Church and did hereby cast great contempt upon the Church and what they had done. And not only that but you did also countenance him in the book that he wrote and published, and gave testimony to it although it was an unfair, and in many instances an untrue account of things, and did abound with scurrility and many unchristian and reproachful reflections upon the Church and particular persons in it. Now these things we esteem sinful on your part, and we cannot be satisfied without a frank acknowledgment thereof. It is also expected that you promise and endeavour to promote the peace and edification of the Church according to your duty in your station." "He refusing to acknowledge his fault in these respects was not received again amongst us."

The following entries occur in 1775-6:—

"*29th March, 1775.*—As Mrs. Z. is accused of uttering a falsehood, it was agreed to give her till next Quarter Day to consider of it, whether she will fall under the charge and make proper submission to the Church, or have the charge proved against her by evidence."

"*28th June, 1775.*—Upon enquiring into the affair of Mrs. Z. it was agreed that she has been guilty of unguarded liberty with her tongue." The pastor and

one member were deputed to admonish her and ask her to promise amendment.

“*11th October, 1775.*—It was agreed to wait awhile with respect to Mrs. Z., to see how she behaves herself, and to regulate their conduct towards her accordingly.”

“*27th March, 1776.*—As Mrs. Z.’s conduct since last October offended the Church rather than give any satisfaction, it was agreed to suspend her from communion and regard her no longer as a Church member.”

Two sisters had a quarrel. To one of them, who was a member of the Church, this message was sent :—

“To Mrs. ——. The Church hears with regret that any discussion should have taken place between her and her sister. If Mrs. —— be conscious of having given her sister any cause of offence they beg she will take proper measures to be reconciled to her; and, as it is probable that both parties may have been tempted to act inconsistently with their religious profession, they exhort Mrs. —— to guard against the indulgence of any temper of mind contrary to the precepts and example of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

A still more interesting case is that of a woman who made very serious charges against a fellow member of the Church. She, however, declined to attend a meeting of the Church to substantiate or retract the charges. A deputation was appointed to go and hear the charges in presence of the accused. She declined to receive

the deputation. This was taken as a proof that she had been guilty of making accusations which she was unable to confirm, and would not retract, and she was separated from the Church. In the letter in which the resolution of the Church was conveyed to her, it was pointed out that to bear false witness is a violation of the law of God. The letter then goes on to say:—"No one can be continued in any society who refuses to submit to its discipline, and its rules of government. The Church has thought it its duty to separate you from its communion, and prays that you may be convinced that you have indulged in a very unchristian spirit, that you have sinned, and that you may be led to exercise true and sincere repentance." Eight years afterwards, this offender was restored on manifesting a proper spirit.

A second group of cases, remarkably few in number, refer to the sin of drunkenness. The first case occurs in 1714, and is thus recorded:—"There was one A. B. His crime was notorious drunkenness, which he repeated over and over, notwithstanding the serious admonitions given him both private and public. By all our endeavours we could not bring him to repentance and amendment of life, and therefore we did esteem it our duty to discharge ourselves of him by casting him out of the Church."

The next case is more remarkable as showing the tenacity with which the Church clung to an erring brother, and the probable insistence of total abstinence long before the modern Temperance movement began. On 5th April, 1804, a deputation

was sent "to have some conversation with a member respecting his improper conduct in being several times intoxicated with strong liquor." On 18th July the deputation reported that he was deeply sensible of his sin and expressed a very great desire to avoid it in future, and declared his willingness to submit to, and acquiesce in, whatever the Church thought proper to do, respecting him. The Church continued his suspension from the ordinance of the Lord's Supper and agreed "to recommend to him a particular line of conduct which the brethren were of opinion would have a tendency to prevent the repetition of his crime, and in the name of the Church to insist upon his adhering to it." On 4th October it was reported that he fully acquiesced in the decision of the Church, was very thankful for its advice, and promised to adhere to it. The suspension was again continued. At the beginning of the following year the Church intimated that while they had not heard of any criminal conduct, yet "they had some reason to think that he had not strictly adhered to the advice given to him." On 5th April, 1805, this sad record occurs. The deputation reported that since the last quarterly meeting Mr. W. had confessed "that he had not adhered to the advice given, as he ought to have done, but had been intoxicated with liquor several times since; and this being confirmed by some of the brethren present, the Church thought it the most proper step to separate him from the communion as there appears at present no hope of his acting with that

propriety which was necessary to the credit of religion. The deacons were appointed to inform him of the resolution of the Church, and also to exhort him to consider his ways and manifest his repentance to be genuine by forsaking them and returning to God; in which case the Church will gladly receive him again as a member."

A happier case than the former is that of a man who was first separated from the Lord's Table and then excluded from membership for the sin of drunkenness. After eight years of struggle and repentance on the man's part, and earnest prayer on the part of the Church, the following delightful entry was made: "Resolved, that the brethren rejoice to hear of the repentance and reformation of —, and, in the hope that he will in future adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things, agree to restore him to fellowship." There was joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repented.

A third group of cases of discipline refer to want of integrity in business. The first case occurs nearly two hundred years ago, and is very strongly worded. "There was one C. D. who was cast out for dishonest dealings, and notorious lying, and deceiving those he had dealings with. We hoped once that he might have been a useful person in the Church. But he plunged himself into a great deal of business in the world, not considering what he did, so that many lost a great deal by him, to the great reproach of religion; for he always represented his circumstances as very good and prosperous, thereby to

induce people to lend him money, when he could not but know that things were very bad with him."

In 1813 the following resolution was adopted in regard to failure in business:—"The peculiar exigencies of the times having produced many instances of insolvency, and some cases having occurred of this kind among professors of religion, in which there appears to have been a culpable continuance in business after it ought to have been given up, and an expenditure continued in, which must have been at the cost and loss of the creditors, the Church has thought it necessary, in order to express its sentiments on the subject, to resolve, that if any member of this Church shall hereafter become insolvent, such person shall be suspended from the communion of the Church, until such time as he shall either convince the Church that he is not guilty of wilful negligence, delay, or extravagance; or has expressed such contrition and repentance as the nature of the case renders necessary." It may be interesting to see how the resolution was applied in specific cases. "Mr. —, a member of the Church, having declined in his circumstances, and made a composition with his creditors, it became necessary that his conduct should be inquired into. After such inquiry, and receiving the report of two of the brethren appointed to converse with him, it was resolved:—'That it is the opinion of this Church that Mr. — ought to have communicated the state of his circumstances to his creditors at a much earlier period than he did, but that the Church is at the

same time satisfied that he had no fraudulent intention in that delay. They regret the situation to which he is reduced, and trust that it will render him more cautious for the future, and that he will take the first opportunity to make full compensation to those who have sustained loss by him.’”

A still deeper note of sympathy is found in the following case. “A brother of the Church, having met with very serious losses, and been compelled to make a composition with his creditors, a report was made to the Church, from which it appeared that Mr. — had acted with perfect integrity, that his creditors were fully satisfied with the uprightness of his conduct, and that the circumstances of the case entitled him to the special sympathy of his Christian brethren. It was therefore resolved that the Church, having heard the report of the officers with regard to Mr. —, are fully convinced of his integrity, affectionately sympathise with him in his affliction, and agree at once to restore him to communion.” Thus was mercy blended with judgment.

A fourth question of discipline arose out of the practice of occasional conformity. It will be remembered that the Test and Corporation Acts, which were left unrepealed from the reign of Charles II., required all who held civil, military, or municipal office to take the sacrament according to the rites of the Church of England. Many Presbyterians and some Congregationalists held

offices of various kinds during William's reign and afterwards, and they were obliged by these Acts occasionally to conform. It is easy to see how the question should give rise to serious debate in the Churches. Some held that it was unlawful to give any countenance whatever to a State Church; others continued to reverence the Church from which they had been thrust out at the Restoration. An echo of the controversy is found in the Castle Gate Church Book. Two entries occur in 1775. On 12th January, "After prayer at an extraordinary Church meeting, it was proposed to the brethren, whether they had any intention at the Michaelmas quarter-day of attempting anything against those of the brethren who are in the Corporation on account of their occasional conformity, and it was unanimously agreed that they had no such design. . . . so long as they continue peaceable members of this society." In June of the same year, however, it was resolved, while not giving any disturbance to those who had occasionally conformed in times past, "in future, to consider this conduct as a forfeiture of their place and privileges in this Church."

The fifth question of Church discipline, and the last with which we shall deal, is attendance at the services for the public worship of God. On 17th July, 1825, the following declaration is made:—"Some irregularity having taken place in the conduct of certain members of the Church with respect to attendance on public worship, it was thought necessary to pass a declaratory resolution on the subject.

It was therefore resolved, that as it is the duty of the members of a Christian Church to attend regularly on the ordinances of divine worship on the Lord's day, with the Church to which they belong, and so far as circumstances will permit, at all other times, if any member of this Church shall voluntarily omit such attendance during the period of two months, without communicating reasons for such omission to the Church, such member shall be considered as having forfeited all right to the privileges of a member of this Church, and except he or she shall, upon inquiring into the motives of his or her conduct, satisfy the Church, shall be wholly excluded from communion." An earlier resolution (June, 1798), in reference to the Lord's Supper, declares, "that if any member of the Church shall be absent from the Lord's Supper twice together, he shall be called upon to state the reason for such neglect."

In a general order of the Church, drawn up and printed in 1828, are found the following rules relating to the subject of discipline and the mode of administering it:—

"1st. Church censures consist sometimes of reproof merely, and at other times of suspension from the Lord's Table.

"2nd. Censures are inflicted in case of open immorality, such as drunkenness, fornication, extortion, covetousness, idolatry, raillery. In these cases censures are preparatory to excommunication unless there be satisfactory marks of repentance.

“ 3rd. Censures are inflicted in case of heresy, according to the command of the Apostle (Titus iii. 10).

“ 4th. Censures are sometimes inflicted in case of private offences. Where our Lord’s rule has been followed, and the offended individual has first seen his offending brother alone, next in the presence of one or two brethren, and lastly wishes to bring the matter before the Church ; if the officers approve of his conduct the Church is to hear, and if it judge the offending brother to have acted wrongly, is to admonish him.

“ 5th. According to a rule of the Church passed in the year 1813, insolvency *ipso facto* suspends from the communion of the Lord’s Table till the Church shall have inquired into the circumstances and exculpated the individual ; or, if he be thought guilty of wilful negligence, delay, or extravagance, till the Church be satisfied of his repentance.

“ 6th. According to the custom of this Church, the deacons are enjoined to note the absentees from the Lord’s Table, to inquire the reason of absence when it has been neglected at two successive opportunities, to admonish as the case may require, and, if necessary, to bring the case before the Church.”

When censure failed to produce the desired effect, the Church proceeded to the more awful methods of exclusion and excommunication. The following rules define and describe these solemn acts of the Church:—

“ 1st. Exclusion is the mere act of separating from this particular Church. Excommunication is, in

addition, the act of putting out of the visible kingdom of Christ into the visible dominion of Satan.

“2nd. In case of open immorality, when censures have failed in producing repentance, excommunication must be resorted to (1 Cor. v. 4, 5).

“3rd. In case of heresy and private offence, if any one neglect to hear the Church he is to be esteemed as a heathen man and a publican—of course, therefore, to be excommunicated.

“4th. In case Divine ordinances be altogether neglected, the Church is to judge according to circumstances whether after admonition it shall merely separate or excommunicate the individual.

“5th. In case Divine ordinances in connection with this Church be neglected, the duty of the offending member to this Church is undischarged, and if Divine worship be voluntarily neglected for two months the offending member shall be excluded unless he or she can give satisfactory reasons for his or her conduct.”

If some of these rules seem to the modern reader unnecessarily stern, and if some of them seem even to claim a power of judgment which no human being is entitled to exercise, two things ought to be remembered. In the first place, the early Independents were profoundly concerned for the purity of the Church, which represents Christ to the world. On the Church rested the awful responsibility of witnessing to the pure and holy Saviour. It was His body, and therefore no pains must be spared to make it beautiful. In the second place, underneath the

somewhat stern exterior of the early Independents there lay a tender heart that yearned for the salvation of men. They clung to their members with a solicitude that puts us to shame. They strove with all their power to reclaim the fallen, to strengthen the feeble, to bring back the erring. They continued their discipline month after month, and sometimes year after year. It was only after hope itself failed that they resorted to separation. The following letter from the minute-book of the Church at Sutton-in-Ashfield, which used to be united with Castle Gate, shows the spirit of urgent entreaty which characterised the discipline of the early Independents:—"To me is committed the painful task of informing you that the Christian Society to which you have been united was dissatisfied with your late conduct in absenting yourself from all their meetings for religious worship, and likewise with the reasons you have given to the brethren who were deputed to pay you an admonitory visit. They have also come to the resolution of suspending you from the communion for the space of six months, hoping in the meantime that you will see that it is an evil thing, and bitter, to forsake the Lord your God and depart from the ordinance of His house, and praying that you may receive that grace which will quicken your soul, give you an interest in His pardoning mercy, and enable you so to walk as to give no offence either to the world or to the Church of God. That God would pour out His spirit upon you and give you repentance unto life, and keep you from the snares and

stratagems of the tempter, and from the evil that is in the world, and that He would restore unto you the joy of His salvation, that you may again be received into His fold, is the sincere prayer of your Christian friends, and particularly of your affectionate minister."

CHAPTER VIII

THE ASSOCIATION OF CHURCHES

WHILE Independents have always disclaimed the authority of ecclesiastical courts, they have never contended for the isolation of the Churches. The recently adopted constitution of the Congregational Union of England and Wales provides for independence of the individual Church in the reception and dismissal of members, the election of pastor and officers, the order of worship, and all that concerns its internal administration. At the same time it recognises the necessity for union of the Churches in order to carry out Church extension movements, missionary work, the training of ministers, the assistance of weaker Churches, and the other objects which demand co-operation on a large scale. It may not be without interest to look at the attempts of the early Independents in the direction of union. In the Castle Gate Church Book are preserved, "for the benefit of posterity," the records of an Association of Churches which was commenced as early as 1720. In that year Castle Gate united with the Churches at Bolsover, Chesterfield, Sutton, Sheffield, and probably Moorgreen and Attercliffe, to form an "Association for mutual self help and guidance." The

records give evidence of a considerable dash of Presbyterianism in the constitution and work of the Association. Nor is this to be wondered at when we remember the attempts that were made in the end of the seventeenth century to unite the Presbyterians and Independents. The Association of Churches was strictly representative. Its decisions were those of the "Assembled Churches." The assembly was composed of the ministers and duly authorised delegates or "messengers" of the Church. The assembly met in spring and in autumn, usually at Bolsover, "at the sign of the Swan." The meetings were continued for two days. Members were censured if they failed to attend. On one occasion, when the Assembly met at Sheffield, a note was issued in the following terms:—"That such as live at a distance be at the Rose and Crown in Sheffield as soon as possible the day before the said meeting, being the 4th of August, 1724, and that affairs be so ordered by each person there as to stay till Thursday morning." A large part of the time was spent in worship, and in debating questions of Church organisation and religious experience. The Assembly made appointments for the observance of days of fasting and prayer in the churches, arranged for ordination services, and assisted at the "installment" of ministers. It sanctioned the reception of "calls" by ministers, and fixed the time within which they must give their answer. It directed its members to report its proceedings to their respective Churches, and censured the messengers of Castle Gate Church

for neglecting their duty in this respect. On one occasion a member under censure of one Church was received by another in the same town. The matter was brought before the Association, which pronounced the course to have been "highly irregular and unscriptural." The Association, however, does not "cancel the act of the Church, as that would have been a direct infraction of Independency."

Another evidence of the presence of a Presbyterian tendency is afforded in the fact that the Associated Churches debate the question "whether ruling elders are of Divine institution, and a distinct office from the ministry, ordained and appointed by Christ in His Churches," and answer it in the affirmative. The answer was in harmony with the practice of the Congregational Churches at that time. Castle Gate Church, "in common with the generality in the kingdom, had in addition to a pastor and deacons, a *ruling elder*. It was the duty of this officer to take, conjointly with the pastor, a spiritual oversight of the Church, while the deacons attended to its secular concerns and the relief of the poor." The duties of the elder, according to the findings of the Associated Churches, were to examine the qualifications of applications for membership, to call Church meetings and prepare the business, to watch over the conversation of the members and see that they walk regularly; to endeavour to heal divisions and appease quarrels; to visit the sick and pray for them, and to admonish and warn the brethren if they see anything amiss. "The eldership was

continued at Castle Gate till the year 1764, when it was suffered to expire. It is probable that at that time the belief had come to prevail, that there is not sufficient Scripture warrant for such an office as a permanent institution of the Church."

As an illustration of an early attempt to provide a working union of Independent Churches, the rules of this Association are full of interest. They are thus recorded:—

"It is hereby agreed by us, the Ministers and Officers of our respective Churches:

"1. That we meet together at those set times that shall be appointed, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and *none of us in a private capacity*, but as persons regularly authorised and deputed by those Churches that we severally relate to, and are in communion with; which practice we think to be warranted by Acts xv. 1-4, also by 2 Cor. viii. 23, and Philippians ii. 25.

"2. That the drift of our conversation and conferences when thus met together as messengers or persons deputed by the Churches shall centre in the concerns of the Churches that we do represent, as our great and main business for that season.

"3. That the stated and more special ends of our thus meeting together as deputed by the Churches is to strengthen the hearts and hands of one another in all the ways and work and ordinances of Christ, that so by the Divine blessing the power of godliness and the peace and order of the Churches may be revived and increased amongst us.

“And to this end we propose and agree:—

“1. Mutually and cheerfully to give counsel and advice to each other, upon such matters as concern the Churches we belong to.

“2. In the spirit of love to give and receive, mutually, admonitions, instructions, and exhortations, as the occasion shall require; and to watch over one another in the Lord as far as we can; so that, if we know of anything practised, or omitted in any of our Churches, that may be provoking in the eyes of our great God and Saviour, the Lord Jesus, faithfully to admonish of it, and with Christian meekness to receive admonition.

“3. As Churches to take care of each other's welfare in externals as well as internals, communicating to the necessities of each other as there shall be occasion, and we have power and opportunity; and to endeavour to clear up the reputation of our several societies if unjustly aspersed or injured, and so to comfort ourselves together.

“4. To endeavour to find out the causes of the manifest decay of the power of godliness in our hearts and lives and families, and of the awful declensions from the purity of doctrine and discipline in our Churches.

“Finally, in every way to help, profit, strengthen, comfort and build up one another and serve the Churches we severally belong to, according to the rules and directions of God's Holy Word as far as it shall please God to give us understanding in them.”

The proceedings of the Associated Churches throw a valuable light on the customs and usages of the early Independents. At the meeting of the Association at Sheffield in 1725, the subject of discussion was "the conveniences or inconveniences that attend a person's giving in his experience to the Church, either by writing or word of mouth, and not by the hand of an elder." The fact was taken into account that there were persons who, through "bashfulness or want of capacity," shrank from making a public declaration of their experience to the whole Church. At the same time it was resolved "that we do best approve of persons making a declaration to the Church of the dealings of God with their souls in order to admission; but yet if it happen that any should not be free to make such declaration, it shall be no bar to their admission if there be nothing else to be objected against them."

Great attention was given to the subject of Church attendance. Those who neglected the public worship of God must be made sensible of the evil and danger of their course, and dealt with by "advice, counsel, and reproof." If they refused to take warning, and persisted in their negligence, they were to be suspended, and, finally separated, in the hope that it might please God to make them sensible of their irregular and unjustifiable practices, and so fit them to be received again "with all Christian love and thankfulness to God."

The Associated Churches recommended solemn fasting and extraordinary prayer (1) "When sin and

iniquity, and that of the most heinous and provoking kind, abound among the people, and they become guilty of great defection and lamentable revoltings from God, and breach of covenant with Him"; (2) "When the Lord reveals His wrath from heaven and threatens by His providence, by sore and heavy judgments, to contend with the people"; (3) "When the people lie under the immediate stroke of God's hand, with respect to national and public afflictions and calamities"; and (4) "In case of any extraordinary favours that a person or people are desirous to obtain from God."

The duties of Church members toward one another were thus set forth at a meeting of the Associated Churches:—"It is the duty of members (1) to love one another—to neglect this duty is to fail to imitate Christ, and to deprive themselves of the brightest evidence of being of the number of His disciples; (2) to pray much with, and for, one another; (3) to preserve unity and avoid divisions; (4) to visit one another and discourse with one another about the things of God; (5) to be of a forgiving spirit, especially to those who give sufficient signs of repentance after a fall; (6) to sympathise with one another in affliction; (7) to watch over one another's conversation, and reprove one another as there is occasion."

The following question has an ancient tang:—"What are the proper methods to revive the laudable custom of Christians entertaining one another with savoury spiritual conversation?" The answer

is given under two heads, and is as quaint as the question. “(1) In order hereunto we judge Christians are much to exercise themselves in reading and meditating on the holy word of God, and should use diligent endeavour to get a good stock of scriptural experimental knowledge. Men entertain their company with what their hearts are stored with. Poor provision most professors have their hearts stored with if judgment be formed from what ordinarily proceeds from them. It is to be feared that the word of God is greatly neglected or cursorily and heedlessly read by most professors of religion. (2) Having such scriptural matter and furniture for entertaining one another with savoury spiritual conversation, we should not only be concerned to get, but to keep in exercise, those graces which may quicken us to employ it, namely, zeal for the glory of God and love to precious souls.”

The vexed question of the Christian's relation to the world engaged the attention of the Associated Churches. It was framed as follows:—“Whether persons, professing the Christian religion in the purity and strictness of it, should frequent the sports and diversions practised by the world, such as horse-races, balls, plays, and cards?” The answer is in the negative. Scripture bids us abstain from all appearance of evil. The evil of horse-races is that “persons come and waste their time for many days together in sloth and idleness, excess, and drunkenness.” Moreover, “races tend to promote or cause a great deal of money to be spent in wagering. They are

likewise often the occasion of other disorderly practices, as balls, where they subvert the order of nature in sitting up almost all night at their sports. Sometimes they promote and are attended with plays, cock-fightings, &c." To this answer objectors are represented as replying, "But we attend them without being engaged in these evil practices; we only go to look on; we lay no wagers, attend no balls at night, nor plays, and therefore we may innocently look on." They are, however, met by the final answer, "Though we do not actually join in their extravagances, yet we are forbid to countenance them by our presence." To be present and look with satisfaction and pleasure on the occasion of so much evil is at once to have fellowship with those that do evil, and to give offence to many serious Christians.

Enough has been said to show that the Association of Churches played a large part in the life of the early Independents, and in some degree anticipated, by one hundred and fifty years, even the latest developments of Congregationalism.

CHAPTER IX

ANCIENT CUSTOMS OF THE CHURCH

SCATTERED over the pages of the Castle Gate Church Book are many interesting references to the customs and usages of the Independents. The general order of public worship does not seem to have differed greatly from that which now prevails. Praise, prayer, and preaching then, as now, made up the service. The preaching of the Independents was largely expository, and was marked by a deep earnestness. Preaching specially to young people on 1st January, 1703, Mr. Ryther thus introduced his text:—"Let us attend with seriousness, and with a holy awe of God, unto that part of His word which we have upon record, Psalm xxxiv. 11. 'Come ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord.'" The Puritan sermon, as a rule, was remarkable for the number of its divisions and sub-divisions, but there were exceptions. Thus a sermon by Mr. Ryther on the text John xii. 26, "If any man serve me, him will my Father honour," shows a simple two-fold division: "First, we have here a great and incumbent duty—that of serving the Lord Jesus Christ; secondly, a glorious privilege annexed to that duty—the sincere servant of Christ shall be honoured of the Father."

The sermon was usually of great length. Sometimes, however, the preacher had compassion on his people, and divided his discourse. On the morning of 18th October, 1702, Mr. Ryther preached at Flintham upon the text, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to Thy Word"; and in the afternoon of the same day gave what is called the "application" of the morning's discourse. This was certainly a simpler and less trying method than that of Philip Henry, one of the ejected ministers of 1662, of whom we are told that "at nine o'clock public service began, which did not conclude before noon, after which there was a rest of an hour and a half. He then read and commented on a chapter of Scripture, catechised the children, expounded the catechism, and preached another sermon. This is a fair sample of public religious service amongst Nonconformists at this period." The service at Castle Gate began an hour later than that of Philip Henry, but in other respects the above quotation is probably a true indication of the way in which public worship was conducted. The value put upon the sermons may be judged from the fact that in 1738 Castle Gate Church agreed to hold a meeting "at half an hour after five o'clock in the afternoon" of alternate Tuesdays, at which certain brethren were appointed "to repeat the sermons delivered." Two brethren seem to have been appointed to "repeat" on each occasion.

How to spend Sunday evenings became a growing

difficulty. Many of the members doubtless used the time for the religious instruction of their children at home. Others, however, had to be provided for. Hence in 1734 a subscription was raised for a Sabbath evening lecture to be delivered fortnightly, and "to be continued for one year, to vindicate the doctrine of the Trinity, and the proper Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost, and to promote serious godliness in the youth of the day by preaching several sermons to them; to begin about Lady-day, 1735." The sum subscribed was 12*l.* 16*s.* It was probably sufficient to carry on the lectures for a considerable time, for we find from the Church Book that the fee paid to ministers for conducting the services on Sunday was only one guinea.

Nearly a hundred years passed before a regular Sunday evening service was established. In the historical notices of the bi-centenary volume its gradual introduction is described. "In 1796 it was held *quarterly*, when two of the brethren engaged in prayer, and the minister gave a short exhortation. After this, it came to be a *monthly* service; and in 1807 it was thought prudent to hold it every Sabbath." The service was still, however, of the nature of a prayer meeting. "Under this character, it would seem to have been at length discontinued. The ordinary services were confined to the morning and afternoon, there being an occasional lecture or charity sermon in the evening." In course of time a feeling sprang up in favour of a constant Sabbath evening service. At a quarterly meeting, November 16th,

1819, "Some conversation was had on the advantages and disadvantages of three public services on the Lord's Day. The pastor expressed his desire to conform to the judgment and wish of the Church, so far as his strength might enable him; but the general feeling of the brethren present appeared to be, that two services were as many as could be profitably improved, and that the evening service had also, in many instances, an injurious tendency to interfere with important duties of a private and domestic nature."¹ The tide was, however, running too strongly in favour of a Sabbath evening service to be thus stayed. Under date July 11th, 1827, we read as follows:—"Some conversation was entered into with regard to the propriety of establishing an evening service. Resolved, that this meeting shall adjourn till next Lord's day, when the subject of an evening service shall be more fully discussed." Again, "July 15th, *Adjourned Church Meeting*. Resolved, unanimously, that there be a Sabbath evening lecture; that Messrs. Richard and William Alliott be requested to conduct it, so long as the latter remains in town, and that afterwards Mr. R. Alliott be requested to conduct it till midsummer next."¹ It is needless to say that the lecture here referred to was simply an exposition of some passage of Scripture.

A week-evening service appears to have been held from the earliest times. In a former chapter, the fact is noted that after the Revolution, the Independents and Presbyterians had a united service, which

¹ Castle Gate Church Book..

was conducted in turn by the ministers of the two denominations. These united lectures were probably the forerunners of the regular prayer meeting or week-night service. Early in the eighteenth century, the following record appears in the Church Book, "Every week, on Tuesday evening, we have a private meeting which lasteth about two hours, from 5 to 7 o'clock. One Tuesday night for catechising and instructing children and youth, beginning with prayer and ending with singing and prayer. The other Tuesday evening we have a conference on some practical question, carried on by the officers and brethren of the Church. The pastor sums up all that has been said. At other times, upon occasion, we have days of prayer, some ordinary, others more solemn, as the providence of God called for."

These days of special prayer were held on a great variety of occasions. A few quotations from the Church Book may not be uninteresting. At the quarterly meeting on 5th October, 1739, it was agreed "That there should be three days appointed for humiliation and prayer that the Lord would be pleased to preserve these lands from foreign enemies, and from growing errors." On 3rd June, 1740—and on 4th July—some time was spent in prayer "on account of the dry season." Again, on 3rd October of the same year, "it was appointed that some time be spent in prayer on Wednesday, 15th October, at 10 o'clock to implore God for preventing public calamities with respect to the season." In 1742, at the time of a religious revival in America, the following

resolution was passed by the members of Castle Gate Church :—"The Church, taking into their serious consideration the great goodness of God with respect to the season, in giving us, in so merciful a manner, the plentiful weeks of harvest, and also considering the riches of His grace in pouring out in so plentiful a manner the effusions of His spirit, not only in several places of this island, but also in New England, therefore they agreed that some part of Wednesday, the 20th of this instant, should be set apart for thanksgiving to God for these mercies, and humbly supplicating to Him for the continuance of them, and particularly that *conversion-work* may have an effectual spread, not only in these places, but all over Christendom." "In 1745, when the Pretender came as far south as Derby, the Church assembled and appointed a weekly prayer meeting, to be held on the Wednesday evening. This was kept up for several successive quarters till a special thanksgiving service was held on the third Wednesday in July, 1746, 'to give thanks for the late victory obtained near Culloden.'" From 1746 to 1753, special meetings are held on account of an infectious disease among the cattle, and prayer is offered "that the Lord would be pleased to put a stop to it." On one occasion prayer for "direction in the choice of an assistant, and for a blessing on his labours," is coupled with prayer "that God would avert the stroke that is gone out amongst the cattle." In 1756, prayer meetings are held "on account of the French invading us," and in 1762 "on account of the Spanish war breaking

out, and the critical situation of public affairs." Coming down to 1834, we find a day of thanksgiving set apart to commemorate the abolition of negro slavery.

The customs of the Puritans varied considerably in regard to praise. "The Baptists, like the Quakers, had conscientious scruples against public singing. Books were written to prove that the only Scriptural singing was from the heart, and that women especially ought no more to sing than to speak in church. In one or two places where singing was at all allowed, it was agreed to sing only once, and *that* after the last prayer was ended, so that those who disapproved of the practice might have an opportunity of leaving the meeting; but even this compromise created dissatisfaction."¹ In Castle Gate, singing seems to have been part of the service from the earliest days. Undoubtedly, however, it was by far the least effective part. Preaching was a passion, and prayer a delight, among the Puritans. But they failed to reciprocate Luther's desire "to see all the arts, but especially music, in the service of Him who created them." In the days of the Commonwealth they "drew their inspiration from the Book of Judges and the Psalms. The songs of Miriam and Deborah, and the wrathful imprecations of David well served their need." During the persecution, they were often afraid to lift up their voices in song, lest they should attract the attention of the informer and bring upon themselves the wrath

¹ "History of the Free Churches of England" (Skeats and Miall).

of the authorities. In Castle Gate Dr. Patrick's version of the Psalms was used up to 1760, and the singing was led by a clerk who "gave out" one line at a time. This custom of giving out each line and singing it by itself continued till 30th December, 1760, when it was decided "to sing forward, and not give out the lines as usual." The giving out of the psalm or hymn line by line was doubtless due to the fact that in those days books were the possession of the few. This seems to be borne out by the statement of the Church Book to the effect that on 25th June, 1760, "the Church agreed to buy a quantity of psalm and hymn books for the congregation." The hymn book here referred to is doubtless the "Hymns and Spiritual Songs" of Dr. Isaac Watts, published in 1707. It is likely that this hymn book may have been used long before 1760, though it was not generally in the hands of the people. The next reference to a hymn book occurs in December, 1844, when "it was decided at a meeting of the Church to introduce and adopt the hymn book of Dr. Reed's selection, to be used together with Dr. Watts's Psalms and Hymns. A subscription was entered into to assist families, and many of the poor were supplied gratuitously with copies of the hymn book." The New Congregational Hymn Book was adopted in 1864, and the Congregational Church Hymnal in 1904.

Among the services of the Church, the communion of the Lord's Supper has always held a central place. During the first part of the Church's history the

service was held once in six weeks. It gradually became the fashion among Independents to have a monthly celebration, and on the 12th April, 1795, at a meeting of the entire Church, it was agreed to fall in with the general custom. For the worthy celebration of the Lord's Supper, the early Independents made special preparation. Friday before the sacrament was set apart for this purpose. Three or four hours were spent "in seeking God." The minister preached a special sermon to lead the people up to the solemn ordinance, and several of the brethren led the members in earnest prayer to God for the worthy commemoration of the Lord's death. The holding of a special "preparation day" was probably continued until the communion of the Lord's Supper became a monthly service. An interesting note occurs in the Church Book under date 12th October, 1763. It was then agreed to put up "two bars to separate the people from the communicants at the Lord's Supper." The writer of the historical notices in the bi-centenary volume adds the following comment: "These were placed across the two wide aisles, leading up to the table pew, there being then no access to the same spot from the sides, as at present. It is remembered that in the earlier part of Mr. Alliott's ministry, he often expressed the hope that the whole space might be required by the communicants, so that these 'bars' might be dispensed with. Long previous to the close of Mr. Alliott's pastorate this came to be the case."¹

¹ Historical Notes in Bi-centenary Volume.

The value which the members attached to the Communion Service may be estimated by the record of attendance. The writer of the historical notices gives the following results: "During the year 1855 the highest communion ticket issued bore the number 522. Of these numbers, 481 had taken the sacrament more or less frequently during the year; 393 had attended the ordinance six times or more, 97 of that number having attended twelve times, and 92 eleven. Of those who had attended *less* frequently than six times, the number was only 88. Still, this leaves the number of 41 who did not attend at all. The deficiency is thus accounted for:—fifteen of the members were, during the entire year, helplessly infirm; three were detained in attendance upon such; thirteen were living at a distance, as in London, etc., and not yet transferred to other Churches; leaving a balance of ten, made up of those who are entered as withdrawn, removed, etc., and who, from such reasons, had not attended the Lord's Supper even once. It is not to be supposed that those who attended any given number of times might not, in some cases, have done so oftener; but the broad features of this statement are still worthy of notice—that 481 members communicated during the year, of whom nearly 400 sat down at the Lord's table six times or more frequently."¹

The admission of members to the Church received the greatest care on the part of the early Independents. The following records appear in the Church

¹ Historical Notes in Bi-centenary Volume.

Book. "3rd October, 1751 At our Church meeting, after prayer, it was agreed that the pastors and elders shall declare what satisfaction they have received from all persons before they be propounded, and that the Church be asked if they be satisfied to have them propounded, and this to be done after the dismissal of the Congregation on the Preparation Day, and the brethren to be desired to stay for that end." "1st April, 1752. At the Church meeting, after prayer, it was agreed that the experiences be read before the members of the Church, who are to be called into the vestry after service is over on Preparation Day, and the Church to be asked if they be satisfied or have any objection; the persons to be propounded six weeks before." From the Minute Book of the Church at Sutton-in-Ashfield, it appears that near the middle of the eighteenth century the members entered into a solemn covenant with each other before God. The covenant, which was signed by all the members, was as follows:—"In hope of Eternal Life through the meritorious death and sufferings of our Lord Jesus, that great Head of the Church, by whose Spirit we profess ourselves to be called and sanctified unto God—In the name of the ever blessed Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and in presence of His holy angels and people and all others here present—we do, as a Church, solemnly give ourselves up in covenant unto the Lord and each other by the will of God, solemnly promising and engaging in the above named presence to maintain, in their simplicity, the grand doctrines

of Salvation by sovereign grace, and by mutual watchfulness and reproof, in the spirit of love, to walk with God and one another in the observation of all gospel ordinances and in the discharge of the relative duties in this Church of Christ and elsewhere as the Lord shall enlighten and enable us, owning all the Churches of Christ and receiving our communion with them when offered. In witness of the same we subscribe our names to the God of Jacob to walk with God after the tenor of this covenant."

The general business of Castle Gate Church was transacted at a quarterly meeting till 1843, when the following resolutions were unanimously carried by a very full attendance of the members: (1) "That the ordinary business of the Church be transacted at a monthly meeting of the members of both sexes; and that it is desirable to hold such meeting after public service on the Wednesday evening before the first Sabbath of the month." (2) "That matters requiring private investigation be assigned to a committee, nominated at the monthly Church meeting, who shall examine and report to the body at large." (3) "That no business be brought before the Church meeting, without previous notice to the minister." The reference in the first of these resolutions to both sexes points to the fact that in Castle Gate Church the management of the affairs of the Church was formerly in the hands of the male members. "This state of things," says Mr. McAll, "obtained, not in consequence of any express rule, but by a kind of tacit consent. It did not exist in Congregational

Churches generally." At the meeting of the Associated Churches at Bolsover in October, 1721, it was agreed "that the result of our meetings here be reported to our *brethren and sisters*—or to the whole Church." This resolution seems to indicate that the Church at Castle Gate was more conservative on this point than its neighbours. That the exclusion of the sisters from a share in the management of the Church was felt to be a loss of power is shown by their occasional admission to the discussion of important matters. "Several times during Mr. Alliot's ministry, the whole Church was called together—as in reference to the more frequent celebration of the Lord's Supper—to some special cases of discipline—and the passing of general rules with regard to the attendance of the members." The full enfranchisement of the sisters was the inevitable result of the recognition of the principle of equality in Christ Jesus, and of the magnificent service which the sisters have rendered to the Church of God.

CHAPTER X

DR. DODDRIDGE

A NAME of special interest to the reader of Castle Gate Church Book is that of Mr. Philip Doddridge, afterwards so widely known as the author of "The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul," and the writer of such well-known hymns as "Hark the glad sound, the Saviour comes," "O God of Bethel, by whose hand," "Awake, my soul, stretch every nerve," "Grace, 'tis a charming sound," "Lord of the Sabbath! hear our vows," "My God, and is thy table spread," "My gracious Lord, I own Thy right," "O happy day that fixed my choice," "See Israel's gentle Shepherd stand," and many others.

After finishing his theological training at the Academy for Dissenters, under the Rev. John Jennings, at Hinckley, Doddridge began his ministry at Kibworth, in Leicestershire, in 1723. In 1728 the following entry occurs in the Church Book:—"Mr. Bateson, being often under disorder and indisposition as to the state of his health, it was judged needful to provide him an assistant. In order thereunto, a day of prayer was kept November 20th, 1728, to ask counsel and direction of God about giving Mr. Philip Doddridge, on whom the

eyes and hearts of the whole congregation seemed to be fixed, a call to assist Mr. Bateson. At the call and desire of the congregation he, the said Mr. Doddridge, did come and preach amongst us, with general approbation, and gave encouragement that he would come to us. But at the same time he did design and endeavour to get himself fixed into the High Pavement meeting, which, when it came to light, he left the town in some confusion." Doddridge's own version of the incident is given in a letter to the Rev. Samuel Clark, of which the following is an extract:—"I will content myself with telling you, in a general way, that I was sent for to Nottingham by the Independent Church there, and while I was making them a visit to enquire into the circumstances of the affair, I had a proposal privately offered me of a settlement with Mr. Hughes and Mr. Whitlock at the great meeting, on terms which I thought would have been a means of uniting the breaches among them, which are now grown wider than ever. In these circumstances, by Mr. Some's advice, I declined the invitation from Mr. Bateson's Church, which I should not indeed have accepted, had no such proposal been made from the others, but the thing now rests in an entire silence, and it is strongly suspected by some who are my very good friends that the overture from the other congregation was made with a politic design of preventing my fixing with Mr. Bateson, which would probably have drawn off some considerable persons from them. . . I have the satisfaction of having acted

a very disinterested and friendly part in the whole affair, but am very uncertain how it will end.”¹ In spite of this refusal, Castlegate Church made a second attempt to secure Mr. Doddridge. It is recorded in the Church Book as follows:—“In the beginning of January following (*i.e.*, 1829), another day of prayer was kept to seek for direction in the choice of an assistant. Mr. Doddridge, being disappointed in his expectation of getting in at the High Pavement meeting, and we having had some encouragement to think that upon further application to him we might obtain him, in February the congregation was called together on this affair, and unanimously voted to give him a second call.” The call was in the following terms:—“At a public meeting held this day by the concurrent voice of the people belonging to our congregation, both members and hearers, we have determined to give you a second invitation to come over to us and exercise your ministerial labours amongst us. As the views of usefulness have been the declared foundation of your conduct, and it has pleased God in His providence to incline our hearts to you, and your expressions of love and affection to us are so strong and engaging, we hope that you will think your way fairly pointed out to us, and that you will give us your favourable and complying answer. Our friends, Mr. Hewish and Mr. Twelves, will inform you of what more is necessary, and that this our second invitation is on the same terms we first proposed to you. Please to

¹ “Correspondence and Diary of Dr. Doddridge,” by Humphries.

accept of our kindest respects and services, and be assured that you will meet with a warm and generous reception amongst us, because we still remain with the utmost affection, Sir,

“YOUR SINCERE FRIENDS AND SERVANTS.”

The sequel is told in the Church Book :—“ Messengers were sent forthwith with a letter of invitation from the Church, which was by him received very kindly, in answer to which he told us that he would go to London to consult his friends there, and upon his return would come to a determination. At his return he came again over to Nottingham and preached with us, and gave us all the encouragement we could expect, that he designed to come and settle with us as an assistant to Mr. Bateson, but declined giving a full and final answer till he had been again with his friends at Harborough and Kibworth, and then would send his final answer and determination in a post or two, which accordingly he did, and therein was contained a positive denial of our repeated invitations, and his full determination not to come to us, which was, indeed, very surprising.” Mr. Doddridge’s answers to the second invitation are contained in two letters. The first is dated February 9th: “I cannot but own myself sensibly affected by the generous invitation which I received from you last night by the hands of Mr. Huish and Mr. Bidens, which is as surprising to me as it is obliging. I had been told strange stories of the severity with which you resented my late conduct

since the date of my letter to Mr. Hilton, and this gave me a great deal of concern, but your present assurance contains so ample a confutation of all such reports that I shall not give either myself or you the trouble of entering any farther into such particulars. What I shall determine in the affair is to me very uncertain at present. However, you will perceive that I did not slight your proposal when you hear that I intend to set out for London on Monday next on purpose to consult with some of my friends there about it, and if they judge as favourably of it as some very valuable friends in these parts have done, it will abundantly convince me that I ought not to decline it. I am sensible that your affairs will not conveniently admit of a long delay, and therefore I shall return an answer as soon as possible, but I hope that in a matter of such great importance you will not grudge to allow me a few weeks. I beg that you will continue to pray that God would show me the way I should take, and that He would furnish me with that fulness of His grace which may engage me to act like a Christian and a minister, and in this and in every other affair to sacrifice all other considerations to a view of usefulness. I heartily recommend you all to the divine conduct and blessing." The second letter is dated April, 1729: "On the most mature deliberation which present circumstances will allow, and after attentive reflection, diligent enquiry, and having consulted the opinion of some most judicious friends, and above all, after having frequently and most

earnestly begged the Divine direction in this most important affair, I am now come to a steady resolution of declining that settlement with you, which you have again proposed in so obliging a manner. I cannot perform this task without sensible regret, for God is my witness that I have the most tender and affectionate sense of your friendship, and should from my heart rejoice in every proper opportunity of expressing it. But in present circumstances I am in my conscience persuaded that duty, and a regard for my future usefulness, require me rather to continue where I am. It is not important to enter into a particular detail of my reasons, since the most considerable are such as it is not in the power of your kindness to remove. Should I indulge in all the tender sentiments which arise in my mind on this moving occasion, I should not know where to end; but I force myself to conclude with returning you my hearty thanks for all that endearing friendship with which you have treated me, and with assuring you that it is my earnest desire and prayer that the great Shepherd of Israel may continually watch over you for good, and may fill up the agreeable part which you have so kindly offered to me with one who may be much better qualified to serve you, and that you may have constant reason to rejoice in this final determination."

In Mr. Doddridge's Diary further light is thrown on the result of the negotiations with Castle Gate Church. He gives two reasons for his final decision: 1st—"Many of their places wanted filling,

and had they continued empty it would have been a discouragement to me, and would have given those who are my enemies in that town some occasion of insulting me. . . . Had they been filled from the High Pavement, that would have provoked the resentment of Mr. Hughes, who triumphs in the persuasion to the contrary, and I must have lived in perpetual broils, which would have impaired the pleasure and perhaps the usefulness of my life. 2nd—Mr. Some had hinted some uneasiness at the free declaration I had made of my Catholic sentiments on the head of the Trinity; which I am afraid would have given some further disgust. Had I been suspected on that head, it would have been a fatal entanglement, and might have ended in the loss of all the interest I have among the Independent friends, and the Presbyterians would not, perhaps, have had it in their power to have done me much service as to a settlement in a Congregational Church. This thought impressed Mr. Some so much that he dissuaded me from going. Whether I were right or not I cannot certainly tell; but I hope that I acted in the sincerity of my heart, and I should have been ready to have exposed myself to any uneasiness had I been convinced that duty required it. I committed the affair to God. He gave that sudden turn to Mr. Some's mind, of whom I asked advice. If I have done wrong, I hope God will forgive me, and I most tenderly recommend to His pastoral care that truly amiable and valuable flock."

In the same year Doddridge settled as pastor of the Church and President of the Theological Academy at Northampton. Here he continued to preach and train students for the ministry till his death in 1751.

To receive invitations to two churches in the same town at a time when Arianism was beginning to cause dispute between them was to be put in a most perplexing position. Doddridge was a man of liberal sympathies. We have his own testimony to the fact that "he endeavoured to write on the common general principles of Christianity, and not in the narrow spirit of any particular party." To the same effect his biographer remarks "there is a remarkable delicacy and caution evinced in the works of Dr. Doddridge whenever the subject approaches the disputed points of theology. The genuine expressions of the sacred writers are then employed, and the reader is allowed to draw his own conclusions, unbiassed by the prejudices of human authorities." Possibly the high orthodoxy of some of the Independents, as well as the double call, prevented Castle Gate Church from securing the service of the great Nonconformist divine.

CHAPTER XI

THE ARIAN CONTROVERSY

AFTER Mr. Doddridge had finally declined the overtures of Castle Gate Church, several fruitless attempts were made to secure an assistant to Mr. Bateson. Mr. Worthington, Mr. Sanderson, and Mr. Wildboar in turn declined to accept the position. Early in 1730, Mr. John Farmer, who was "liked and approved of" by the Church and congregation, began a brief ministry. But according to the Church Book "his conduct was imprudent, and his temper unsettled and uneasy," and after three months he told the people that "he never did design to stay at Nottingham." In April he went to London "where he greatly desired to be." After these disappointments the Church for a few months fell back on the help of neighbouring ministers, who preached once in three weeks, and received a guinea for a day's services. In October, 1730, Mr. Floyd was appointed assistant at a salary of 40*l.* a year. He remained nearly two years, after which he became pastor of the Church at Daventry, Northamptonshire. The next attempt was more successful. A friend who had been in Scotland informed the Church of "a young gent,

a minister of that country, of good abilities and well recommended, Mr. James Sloss by name." Mr. Sloss arrived on 3rd March, 1733, and on the 28th of the month some time was spent in prayer for a blessing on his ministry. Mr. Sloss appears to have created, from the first, a strong feeling in his favour, for little more than two months elapsed when the brethren unanimously agreed to give him a call to be joint-pastor with Mr. Bateson. On 20th June the call was accepted, and on 1st August Mr. Sloss was ordained. At the ordination service Mr. Wordsworth, of Upper Chapel, Sheffield, preached; Mr. Allwood, of Sutton, gave the charge; Mr. Pigott, of Bolsover, asked the questions, and several others "prayed and laid on hands." Among the Castle Gate records is preserved a curious and delightfully interesting hostel bill relating to the cost of entertainment of those who were present at this ordination. It is as follows:—

		£	s.	d.
31st July.	24 suppers	1	4	0
	The Rev. Mr. Wadsworth & Son	0	2	0
	Wine and ale	1	1	9
1st Aug,	Wine and ale in the morning	0	6	3
	32 ordinryes	3	4	0
	14 bottles of wine	1	8	0
	Ale	0	17	8
2nd Aug.	4 ordinryes	0	4	0
	A dish of mutton steaks	0	2	0
	2 chickens	0	2	0
	Wine and ale	0	10	9
	Coffee and tea	0	12	6
	Suppers and breakfast	0	10	0
		2	16	11

£13 1 10

The receipt for this ordination bill is signed by Martha Robinson.

Mr. Sloss, who was an M.A. of Glasgow University, and a keen theologian, came to Nottingham at a time when it was agitated by religious questions. Arianism had already secured a hold among the members of the High Pavement Chapel, and very soon Castle Gate was the centre of a furious controversy. Mr. Bateson, old and feeble, left the brunt of the battle to his colleague, and Mr. Sloss seems to have entered the fray with the true "*perfidum ingenium Scotorum*." The first reference to the controversy in the Minute Book is as follows:—"May 25th, 1736. Some time was spent in prayer and humiliation, to ask direction of God how to proceed about Mr. Joseph Rawson, a member with us, who was suspected of having imbibed the Arian notion, and denying the Supreme Deity of Jesus Christ." The members of the Church at Castle Gate were brought face to face with the great Christological controversy of the fourth century which resulted in the formal condemnation of Arius by the Council of Nicæa, in 325 A.D., and the affirmation in the Nicene Creed of the Eternal Deity of Christ. Arianism holds that the Father alone is God Eternal and unchangeable. He creates the world, not directly, but through the Logos, who is himself created. Christ is therefore himself a "creature," super-human and even super-angelic, but still only a "created demi-god." He was not "the essence"

of the Father; and while he was said to have existed "before time and before the world," yet he was not eternal, and there "was a time when he was not." Whatever we may think of the metaphysical hair-splitting—the quarrelling over a diphthong—of the Councils of Nicæa and Constantinople, there can be little doubt that it was necessary to check the negative and downward tendency of Arian Christology, and that Athanasius, the man of "one idea and one passion," who spent twenty years in exile, and sacrificed everything to his conviction, was justified in regarding the Eternal Divinity of Christ as "the corner stone of the Christian system." "Athanasius charges Arianism with destroying the whole doctrine of Salvation. For if the son is a creature, man still remains separated, as before, from God: no creature can redeem other creatures, and unite them with God. If Christ is not Divine, much less can we be partakers of the Divine nature, and in any real sense children of God." Nothing could be more severe than Harnack's judgment on Arianism. "Only as cosmologists are the Arians monotheists; as theologians and in religion they are polytheists. Finally, deep contradictions lie in the background. A Son, who is no Son; a Logos who is no Logos; a monotheism which does not exclude polytheism; two or three *Ousias*, who are to be worshipped, while still only one is really distinguished from the creatures; an indefinable nature, which first becomes God when it becomes man, and which still is neither God nor

man. . . . The opponents were right ; this doctrine leads back into heathenism. . . . The orthodox doctrine has, on the contrary, its abiding worth in the upholding of the faith, that in Christ God Himself has redeemed men, and led them into His fellowship. . . . This conviction of faith was saved by Athanasius against a doctrine which did not understand the inner nature of religion generally, which sought in religion only teaching, and ultimately found its satisfaction in an empty dialect." The upholders of the orthodox faith in Castle Gate Church were doubtless profoundly influenced by the teaching, not only of ancient, but also of contemporary history. "Historically, Arianism has always tended to work round to the Socinian or strictly Unitarian view of Christ, where it has not gone upwards, through semi-Arianism, to the recognition of His full Divinity."¹ The members of Castle Gate Church had their fears awakened by the condition of the Congregational Churches of America. At the very time when the Rawson controversy was raging, "it began," says Mr. McAll, "to be whispered in the sister Churches of America that Socinianism was amongst them." Mr. Sloss was well prepared to deal with the Arian controversy in his Church. Two years before it broke out, subscriptions were collected (February, 1734), "for a lecture on Sabbath evenings once a fortnight, to be continued for one year, to vindicate the doctrine of the Trinity and

¹ "The Christian View of God and the World," by Professor James Orr, D.D.

the proper Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost, and to promote serious godliness in the youth of this day." Among the contributors are John Sherbrooke, senr., who gives two guineas; John Sherbrooke, junr., Benjamin Lomas, Samuel Fellows, Rowland Swann, and Samuel and J. Wright, who give one guinea each. The subscriptions, amounting in all to 12*l.* 16*s.*, were paid to Mr. Sloss, who afterwards published a book on the doctrine of the Trinity, and it is probable that the volume was made up of the Sunday evening lectures. On 2nd June, 1736, Joseph Rawson was called before the Church, and behaved, according to the minute book, "in a very insolent and unchristian manner." As he would give no direct answer to any question, he was suspended. On 25th June, at the quarterly meeting, he was "again cited before the Church to answer questions proposed to him in relation to the Divinity of Christ, but refused to answer to satisfaction." On 2nd July, the brethren of the Church met again "to discourse further with the said Joseph Rawson, but he still continued very obstinate, and disowned the power of the Church to call him in question." Finally, on 9th July, the brethren met to pass sentence of excommunication, and it may be of interest to give the full record of the proceedings as it appears in the minute book. "This congregation being informed that Joseph Rawson, one of their number, departing from the faith, was generally reputed to have drank in the Arian heresy, and some of our members, having conversed with him privately,

and not being satisfied with the way he delivered himself upon the subject of the Trinity, and considering how much that dangerous error prevails in this place, to the great dishonour of Christianity in general, and the Dissenting interest in particular, and how fatal it might prove to this congregation if it should get any footing amongst us, therefore we judge ourselves bound in conscience for the glory of God the Redeemer, and the preservation of the purity of this Church, to put a timely stop to that infection. And for that purpose did appoint some of our number to converse with the said Joseph Rawson concerning the Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ; who reported that they did not receive that satisfaction that they could have wished. Whereupon they appointed others to inquire into his sentiments; who also conversed with him again and again on the same subject, and put several questions to him. But in his answers he increased their suspicions more and more; which being reported to the Church, they found themselves obliged to call him before themselves. And upon his appearing before them, he treated the Church in a most insolent manner, altogether unbecoming the spirit of Christianity, and denied their authority to inquire into his sentiments. And the question being put to him if the three Persons in the Godhead be one God, the same in substance, and equal in all Divine perfections and glory, he owned them to be one, but would not acknowledge them to be one God, nor would he acknowledge that they were the

same in substance and equal in all Divine perfections and glory. After he was seriously admonished of the heinous nature of his guilt, and exhorted to repentance, the Church thought fit to lay him under the sentence of suspension from the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, after they had set apart a day for humiliation and prayer, for light and direction in this matter. The said Mr. Joseph Rawson was so far from humbling himself under the sentence that he denied that any Church had Scripture warrant for suspending any person, and insisted on being excommunicated, and declared that notwithstanding the sentence of suspension, he would sit down at the table of the Lord. Yea, the very Lord's day upon which that ordinance was to be celebrated he sent a message that he would partake with us therein. He being again called before the Church, and his insolence and obstinacy being represented to him, and being again reprov'd, admonish'd, and exhorted to repentance, the question was put to him, if God the Son was equal with the Father. But he still persisted in his obstinate refusing to acknowledge it. And being again called before the Church, they gave him another question to be answered in any words he thought proper, provided they came up to a sound sense (to wit), whether the Lord Jesus Christ is the one true Supreme God, the same with the Father in nature, and equal with Him in all Divine perfections. To which he would give no other answer than in such expressions of Scripture as the Arians take in an unsound sense, and would

not declare to us that he took these expressions in any other sense than the Arians did, and withal still continued in an obstinate refusing to own the Supreme Deity of God the Son, and His equality with the Father, and plainly told us that he would give no further satisfaction, and that that was his final answer. Upon this, the congregation, taking into their serious consideration the insulting behaviour of Mr. Rawson to the Church, and the dishonour done to the Lord Jesus Christ by his obstinate refusing to own His Supreme Deity and equality with the Father, resolved unanimously to cut him off from their communion, and appointed a meeting of the Church again for that purpose on Friday next at ten of the clock, being the 9th of this instant July, 1736; and sent two of their number to intimate this, and certify to him that they would then proceed to pass the sentence of the greater excommunication against him, unless his repentance prevented it, all other means having been used for his recovery out of the snare of Satan." The sentence was passed by Mr. Sloss in the following terms:—"I do in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ debar you, Joseph Rawson, from all sealing ordinances with us, and excommunicate you from all Christian communion with our Church and fellowship, and deliver you over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh that you may learn not to blaspheme, and that your spirit may be saved in the Day of the Lord Jesus." ¹

The above quotation from the Church Book is

¹ Castle Gate Church Book.

doubtless somewhat of an *ex parte* statement. It appears from other sources that a minority of four voted against the final decision. Feeling ran high. Theological controversy was carried on in an acrimonious spirit. Pamphlets were addressed to the Church by persons who had no connection even with the town. Mr. Rawson published his statement with a preparatory discourse by the celebrated Dr. John Taylor, of Norwich. Mr. Sloss published a reply. After that there followed an address to the Castle Gate congregation by a Protestant Dissenter, who wrote in opposition to Mr. Sloss; and another pamphlet on the anti-Scriptural doctrine of the Trinity, which Mr. Sloss answered. The controversy marked the parting of the ways between Castle Gate and the High Pavement Church. On 28th December, 1739, the members of Castle Gate resolved "that no person be received from the High Pavement congregation as a member of this congregation without giving in their experience, unless they have been received members of that Church before the Rev. Mr. Hewes left that congregation," *i.e.*, in 1735. The theological cleavage became wider as the years went by. Arianism maintained itself at the High Pavement till 1802, when the Rev. James Taylor professed and preached Unitarian doctrine. While no attempt is here made to justify the *odium theologicum*, it ought, in fairness to the Castle Gate Church, to be remembered that they were contending, not for the circumstantials, but for the very essence of their faith. While their catholicity of

spirit may not have reached the modern standard, it was by no means absent. Mr. Sloss, in his narrative of the Rawson case, says: "It is well known that there are, in the congregation that meet in Castle Gate, Presbyterians, Independents, Baptists, and others who sit down together in Christian fellowship with a becoming Christian love and charity, notwithstanding any difference there may be in their judgment about smaller matters; and it is a fixed principle with our society, as we think it ought to be with all Christians, to receive those whom, in the judgment of a true Christian charity, we have reason to believe Christ has received, though they may differ from us in some things that do not affect the essentials of Christianity. But where there is a going off the foundation, as we reckon there is when Emmanuel, the true Supreme God in our nature, is not believed in, then we openly profess before the world that, in that case, we believe there is no foundation for a Christian communion, because the communion of Christians is founded on the union with one Head; and therefore when *one* professes faith in, and union with Emmanuel, the true Christ, and *another* in a super-angelic being, united to a body of human shape, such, differing so widely in the Person who is the object of their faith, in the nature of the thing, cannot have communion together; because the foundation thereof is cut off, to wit, union with the true Christ as a common Head, the only bond and living spring of union among Christians."¹

¹ Narrative of the Rawson Case by Mr. Sloss.

Had a different decision been given in the Rawson case, it is almost certain that Castle Gate would have followed the example of those sister Churches in America, in which the presence of Socinianism was suspected at this time. Till 1803, no Congregational minister in or around Boston had avowed himself Unitarian either from the pulpit or the press. The fact, however, could not long be concealed. "The publication, in 1812, of the English Unitarian work, the *Memoirs of Lindsay*, first taught America what was in its midst. In that book the defections from orthodoxy were confessed, and were, quite naturally, made a subject for rejoicing. It was now found that *all* the Congregational ministers in Boston, with the exception of two, had become Unitarian; and considerably more than seventy-five in various parts of New England."¹ That Castle Gate was kept true to Evangelical Christianity at a most critical period was due in no small measure to the strenuous efforts of Mr. Sloss. If the bitterness of theological controversy was not altogether absent, the records show that persistent efforts were made to heal the breach, and restore the broken fellowship, before the final decree of separation was passed.

¹ Historical Notices in Bicentenary Volume.

CHAPTER XII

SECOND HALF OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

AFTER the tumult of the Arian controversy had subsided, the Church entered on a comparatively peaceful period of steady, if slow, progress. Mr. Bateson resigned in the end of 1739, and it was agreed, at the quarterly meeting on 28th December, to give him 20*l.* as a retiring gift, one-half of this money to be paid by Mr. Sloss out of the "quarterage," and the other half by the Church. Early in the following year several days were spent in prayer for direction in the choice of an assistant. "On such days of prayer," says our record, "we began at ten o'clock in the morning and ended at one." It was not till 1741 that their efforts to find an assistant were successful. In that year Mr. Gervas Wylde received and accepted a call to become assistant at a salary of 35*l.* a year. Mr. Wylde remained at Castle Gate for seven years. In August, 1750, he was ordained the first pastor of Carr's Lane Chapel, Birmingham, which will be for ever associated with the names of his more famous successors, John Angell James, R. W. Dale, and J. H. Jowett. Mr. Wylde ministered at Carr's Lane for sixteen years, and died on 17th November, 1766, in the

fifty-third year of his age. Mr. Thomas Bingham succeeded Mr. Wylde in the assistantship at Castle Gate. He remained for five years, after which he accepted a call from a Church at Dedham, Essex. In 1759, Mr. John Troughton Alliston was appointed co-pastor. He was ordained in February, 1760. Two curious records of the relations of the two ministers may be given. "March 30th, 1762. The Church met as usual and agreed to deliver a paper certifying the days each minister is to preach without interfering one with another." "June 30th, 1762. At our Church meeting it was agreed that Mr. Sloss is to preach a lecture every month, on Thursday, at the usual time; and Mr. Alliston is to preach a lecture every Thursday, at the usual time; but on failure of either of them, the church to stop a guinea out of their salary. But if one be ill, on sending to the other he is to preach it for him, and the other to preach for him again when he is well." It was evidently necessary clearly to define the respective duties of the ministers, and to prevent them "interfering with one another." Mr. Sloss's health broke down in 1764, and he was obliged to get Mr. James Popplewell to assist him for three years. The arrangement does not seem to have worked smoothly. Disputes arose between Mr. Alliston's friends and the friends of Mr. Popplewell, who shortly thereafter went to London to become pastor of the Church at Hare Court. In 1771, Mr. Alliston resigned in consequence of the divided state of the Church. Mr. Sloss was again left without a helper,

but his day of service was almost done. He was seized with a paralytic stroke on the morning of 1st May, 1772, and died the same evening at his house in Houndsgate, in the seventy-fourth year of his age. His body was conveyed to St. Mary's Church and interred in the north aisle. Cresswell's *Journal* informs us that "On Sunday, May 10th, a funeral sermon was preached to a very crowded audience at the Castle Gate Protestant Dissenting Meeting House in this town on the death of the late Mr. James Sloss, M.A., by the Rev. Mr. Winter (from London), from 2 Timothy, 4 ch., 7 ver.—'I have fought a good fight,' &c. The pulpit was on this melancholy occasion put into mourning, and the auditors were extremely attentive to an effective sermon delivered on the decease of an orthodox divine, whose death is a loss to the poor and needy of every persuasion."

A couple of months before Mr. Sloss's death, the Rev. Richard Plumbe, M.A., had received a call to the pastorate of the Church. From a letter of Mr. Plumbe's, preserved among our records, we learn that he had received an invitation from a Church in the west of Yorkshire, and that the path of duty was very dark and intricate. He had, moreover, heard of the long years of contention and animosity through which the Church at Castle Gate had passed, and his gentle spirit shrank from entering into an inheritance of conflict. A quotation from his letter will show at once the difficulties of the situation at Castle Gate, and the courage and wisdom of the man who now faced

them. "It is my earnest desire not only to be made instrumental in spreading the truth and bringing souls home to God, but to promote a Christian spirit and friendly demeanour amongst those who profess godliness, that we may give a good report to them that are without. I hope, therefore,—if you are truly desirous of being settled in peace and concord, to the mutual edification of your souls, and the prosperity of Zion, with the comfort of a gospel minister among you,—it is the study and practice of every individual to forget what is past and to forgive one another in love, as you wish and hope to be forgiven of God, endeavouring to meet each other in friendly amity and Christian concord. Hoping this is your desire, and that you are willing to take any previous steps that may appear necessary to this important end and design, I take the liberty, in a spirit of love and peace, to offer the following particulars to your serious and amicable consideration. 1st. I am desirous to be informed whether your invitation is unanimous and truly cordial, or whether a smaller number does not yield to a greater, though not with hearty consent. If this is the case you need only inform me and give yourselves no further trouble; but if otherwise, I desire 2nd. To know what officers you have in the Church and their names, and whether everything thrown in the way of your mutual walk as Christians in the fellowship of the Gospel is so settled and amicably agreed that you can sit down together in the ordinance of the Supper after your past troubles. 3rd. Whether if, after you

are settled with a Pastor, anything should in the course of Providence turn up wherein the Church is not agreed, and it cannot be settled in peace and good order amongst yourselves: I say whether you will agree to submit the case to a sister Church or Churches to have their opinions, and in which you will meet and submit to one another in peace, and not tenaciously adhere to your own private sentiment in opposition to that of the rest of your brethren and the Church's counsel so asked.

"The cordial settlement of these things or any others which may obstruct the Church's peace and good order is, I think, previous to any Pastor taking the pastoral charge of Castle Gate Church upon him with any prospect of comfort or happiness. We are all subject to infirmities, but we should not knowingly indulge them to the destruction of the good order of society and the prosperity of God's work in our own breast. And though your long unsettled state may have raised the remains of corrupt nature, so as to carry you into too great lengths on all sides, yet I hope you will be concerned for the cause of God and to evidence yourselves to be Christians, and to possess so much of the spirit of your Master as will lead you to submit yourselves one to another in the fear of God; and that therein you and I may be directed by that wisdom which is pure and peaceable, and full of good fruit, is the earnest humble desire and fervent prayer of yours in the gospel and patience of Christ.

"RICHARD PLUMBE."

This bold and uncompromising letter must have received a satisfactory answer, for Mr. Plumbe accepted the call, entered upon his duties on 25th October, 1772, and was ordained on 16th April of the following year. Mr. Plumbe, after labouring for nearly twenty years, died after a short illness on 4th August, 1791, in the fifty-fourth year of his age. The Church Book states that "his prudent and peaceable disposition rendered him a real blessing to the Church and congregation, by whom he was most deservedly esteemed." *The Gentleman's Magazine*, referring to his death, gives the following appreciation of his character and ability:—"As a Divine, his extensive knowledge in theology was well known, and it is to be lamented that his modesty led him to resist the importunity of his friends to publish some pieces of importance. He has left, to regret his loss, three young children, who were about two years since deprived of their amiable mother. To them he was a tender father and diligent preceptor, having begun in them the foundation of a liberal education. As a friend he was social, cheerful, sympathetic, and faithful; as a minister, deservedly approved of by an affectionate and numerous congregation; and amongst the many pleasing features of his character, one was his easiness of access to all persons with whom, of every denomination, he was particularly careful to cultivate peace."

In 1738 the meeting-house was enlarged, and a sum of 193*l.* was collected for the purpose. On 29th December, 1773, it was reported that the roof

was insecure and the pillars much decayed. Messrs. Wright, Lomas, and Need were appointed to collect "the extraordinary expenses."

"In the year 1754 party feeling ran very high in consequence of a most exciting Parliamentary election. One of the disorderly acts which marked the time was an assault upon Castle Gate Meeting House by a body of rioters in the night of April 19th, when extensive damage was done to the woodwork of the interior, and the pulpit was carried off to the market-place and burnt. Of this transaction the only memorial in our possession is a lawyer's bill, which reads as follows:—

April 23rd, 1754. Advice to the Trustees on account of the damage done to the Meeting House, by certain rioters, on the 19th, at night . . . , . . .	s. d.
	3 6
April 25th. Administering oath at the Sessions to six workmen, to the truth of an estimate of the damages	1 0
Recording and filing it	2 0
July 17th. Drawing Petition of Mr. Sherbrooke and others to the Justices, for allowing and certifying specially the present building at Castle Gate for a place of religious worship	2 0
July 18th. Receiving and filing same	1 0
Recording it at length in the Session Book	2 0
Certificate thereof upon parchment	2 0
	<hr/> 13 6

Received Jan. 9th, 1755, of Mr. Lomas, the full contents.

W. SEAGRAVE
[TOWN CLERK]."¹

The first reference to Harvest Thanksgiving services occurs on 1st October, 1742, when the Church,

¹ Historical Notices in Bicentenary Volume.

taking into consideration "the great goodness of God with respect to the season in giving us in so merciful a manner the plentiful weeks of harvest," agreed that Wednesday, 20th October, should be set apart for thanksgiving to God for these mercies.

On 29th December, 1756, it was agreed to have a collection for the poor "on account of the dearth of corn and provisions."

"When the movement was set on foot for establishing the General Hospital the Church at Castle Gate at once encouraged the attempt. A collection was made when the building was in progress, or about to be commenced, in December, 1781. The sum raised amounted to 25*l.*, and this was followed by collections in 1783, 1786, 1787, 1789. Similar aid was given, though less frequently, in subsequent years."

During Mr. Plumbe's ministry a manse was built for the minister at the cost of 469*l.* 4*s.* 6*d.* Special subscriptions were given for the building, but the cost turned out to be so much greater than was at first supposed that 200*l.* had to be borrowed at 5 per cent. and left as a debt on the house. The manse was finished and occupied in 1783.

The Castle Gate Burial Ground, which was originally divided into gardens, was laid out in 1734, and used in the following year. The first person interred was Mrs. Elizabeth Maddey, 22nd January, 1735. Among the succeeding entries are "A Soldier's Child," "A Soldier-march Sergeant Dick." From the minute-book it appears that the parish minister threatened to prosecute certain persons for the

recovery of burial fees. The following spirited resolution was thereupon passed by the Church in December, 1737 :—" It was agreed upon that whereas it was represented to the Church that some persons who had their relations buried in the burying-ground belonging to the Castle Gate Meeting House have been threatened to be prosecuted for not paying the dues unjustly claimed by the parson of the parish, this Church therefore agrees to support any person that shall happen to be prosecuted for not paying the said dues."¹ In 1742 Mr. John Sherbrooke, Mr. Thomas Smellie, and Mr. Benjamin Lomas were appointed to receive all applications for the use of the burial-ground, and no interment could take place without the concurrence of two members of this committee. This committee was also required to insist upon a certificate that the dead were " buried in woollen as the law directs," a " provision designed to encourage the staple manufacture of the country." The minister received two shillings and sixpence for every funeral, and the gravedigger one shilling for making the graves of those above fifteen years of age, and sixpence for all under that age.

The following interesting note in reference to baptism, which appears in the Historical Notices, refers partly to the period under review :—" The Baptismal Register belonging to the Meeting House commences with 1705. The entries up to March, 1837, are carefully copied from the original Registers of the Rev. R. Bateson, the Rev. James Sloss, the

¹ Castle Gate Church Book.

Rev. G. T. Alliston, and the different ministers who subsequently held the pastoral office. The originals have been sent to Somerset House, where they may be consulted under the provisions of the Registration Act. The transcript now in the possession of the minister, was very carefully made by Mr. (afterwards Dr.) Alliott, Mr. Thomas Clark (afterwards M.A., and now Principal of the Dissenters' Proprietary School, Taunton), and Mr. R. W. Preston. From 1837 onwards the register is original. In 1706, the first complete year found in the registry, the number of baptisms entered is sixteen; in 1855 it was twenty-six. In many intermediate years, a century since or more, the number was equal to what it is now, the meeting being the only place in the town or neighbourhood where evangelical Non-conformists could procure baptism for their children. The rite itself was highly venerated by our predecessors. Without confounding baptism with regeneration, it was a favourite mode of speech to talk of our 'baptismal covenant' and of the renunciation in that ordinance of 'the pomps and vanities of the world.' On this ground the brethren assembled [at one of the meetings of the Associated Churches] pointedly condemned any participation, on the part of the 'baptized,' in scenes of worldly amusement. While the Church at Castle Gate has always practised infant baptism, it has never made agreement on this matter a term of communion. Those who have held anti-pædobaptist sentiments have been as freely admitted as others to membership, with the privilege

of voting. There has been a mutual understanding that they would so far hold their sentiments on this matter in abeyance as not to cause division in the Church—a compact with which all parties seem to have been content. It was a somewhat curious departure from this honourable understanding when, so far back as 1743, a female member alleged, as a reason for absenting herself from the Lord's table, that 'the Church was not baptized'! For this and 'other points of her conduct she was suspended from communion till she should confess her guilt.' Three years before this, viz. in 1740, a person in a very different state of mind, having a child to be baptized, desired 'that the service might be performed publicly in the meeting.' The Church consented, and recommended the practice in future 'as far as convenience should permit.'"¹

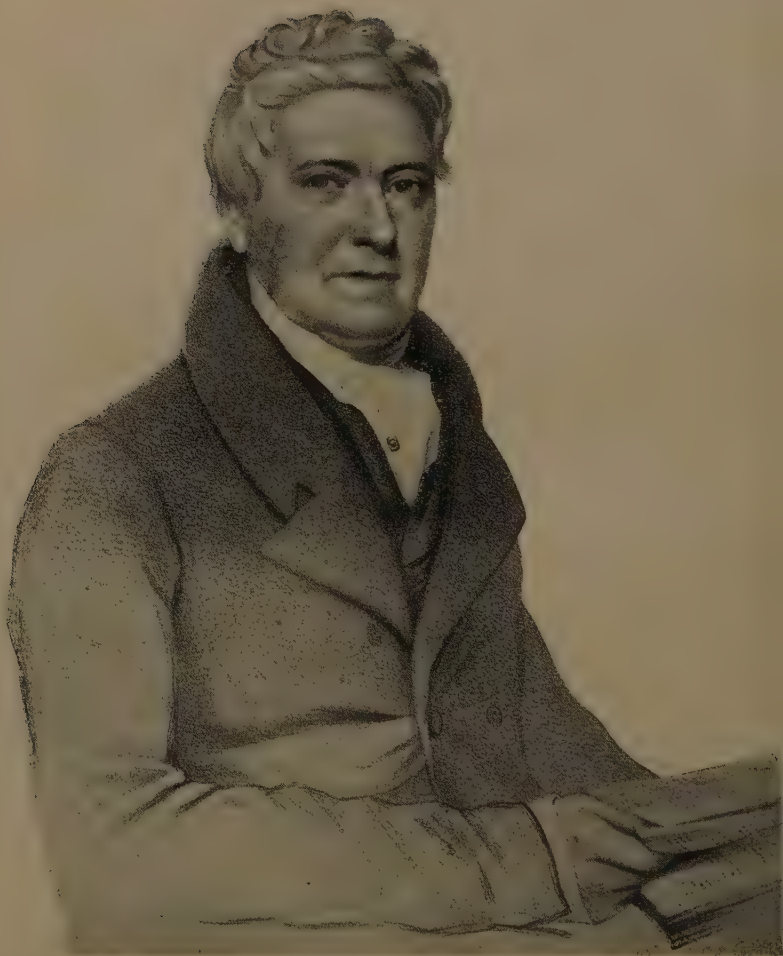
The most interesting baptismal record in the period under review is that of the poet Henry Kirke White. His premature death at the age of twenty-one robbed the world of one who, with longer time, might have carved his name high in the temple of fame. At fifteen he was a regular contributor to the periodicals of the day, and at seventeen he published a volume of poems which secured for him the friendship of Southey. The amazing industry and consuming zeal with which he pursued his studies at Cambridge brought on a wasting consumption, and he died on 19th October, 1806. The entry of his baptism in the Castle Gate register is as follows:—

¹ Historical Notices in Bicentenary Volume.

"No. 1396, April 13th, 1785. Henry Kirk (*sic*), son of John and Polly White." His father was a coarse and ignorant man of low habits, but "his mother was a Neville, a member of a good old Staffordshire family, gentle in her manners, and possessing an educated intellect." His father's mode of life and his attempts to thwart his son's ambition for study made the youthful poet's boyhood sombre and wretched. Henry, however, early imbibed his mother's piety, and it is interesting to note that the Church in which he was baptized still uses in its worship his well-known hymn:—

" Much in sorrow, oft in woe,
Onward, Christians, onward go;
Fight the fight, and, worn with strife,
Steep with tears the Bread of Life.

" Let not sorrow dim your eye,
Soon shall every tear be dry;
Let not woe your course impede,
Great your strength, if great your need."



REV. RICHARD ALLIOTT.

CHAPTER XIII

A NOTABLE SUCCESSION

FEW churches can boast of a worthier succession than that which Castle Gate enjoyed in the ministry of Mr. Richard Alliott and his son. Their pastorates covered the long period of forty-nine years, and their labours were crowned by the devotion of the people and the prosperity of the Church.

After Mr. Plumbe's death in 1791, the Church was without a pastor for three years. Unsuccessful calls were given, in 1792 to Mr. Brooksbank, of London ; in 1793 to Mr. Bottomley, of Scarborough, and early in 1794 to Mr. Bruce, of Wakefield. In the summer of 1794 the Rev. Richard Alliott, of Stratford-upon Avon, conducted the service on two Sundays with great acceptance. The Church met on 15th of June and unanimously agreed to request him to come and preach again in the month of July. The second visit confirmed the impression of the first. As Mr. Alliott had now preached on five Sundays, and delivered several lectures on week days, and his services had met with "general and cordial approbation," the members of the Church thought themselves "plainly directed by Providence to give him an invitation to the pastoral office." Special prayer

meetings were arranged "to request that as the Lord seemed to have directed" the Church "to His servant, He would, if consistent with His glory, direct his way" to the Church. The call was accepted in August, and Mr. Alliott came to Nottingham on 8th October. On 24th November, the Church met for prayer at Mr. Alliott's house, and fixed the ordination service for 7th January, 1795. Owing to the pastor's illness the ordination did not take place till 8th April.

At this time the Church consisted of only forty-one members. It was agreed that Mr. Alliott should receive as stipend the whole of what was collected for the seats, "after deducting twelve pounds per year to pay the clerk and sexton and some other expenses. In 1805 the stipend was fixed at 200*l.* "without any deduction."

Three years after the commencement of Mr. Alliott's ministry several alterations were made in the meeting house, which was observed to be very much out of repair. The walls were raised six feet, a new roof was put on and covered with slate; new windows were inserted, and the gallery stairs, which formerly came down within the building, were turned and made to open into the yard in order to increase the accommodation. These alterations cost 587*l.*

Owing to the steady increase of the congregation, it became necessary to enlarge the meeting house. The side galleries were taken down and rebuilt, with two more seats on the sides, and one in the front.

The stairs were placed entirely outside the building. New and larger windows were introduced. The total cost of the improvement was 1,143*l*. While the alterations were in progress the congregation were "liberally accommodated with the use of the General Baptist Meeting (Stoney Street), in the morning, and the Methodist Chapel in Halifax Place in the afternoon."

One more enlargement of this old building, which had sheltered the congregation since 1689, was made. In the summer of 1825 it was found that there was a great want of room for those who applied for sittings. The organ, which was purchased in 1823 for 230*l*., was first placed in the front gallery. It was now removed and placed in the new gallery which was erected behind the pulpit. In this way the seating capacity of the church was considerably increased to meet the growing demands of the congregation.

One noteworthy fact of this period is the eagerness with which the Church responded to the missionary call which was now being sounded. In September, 1795, the London Missionary Society was formed. A fortnight later the members of Castle Gate Church took a collection for the society at a Sunday afternoon service, at which Mr. Alliott preached a sermon suited to the occasion. The interest thus awakened has happily continued to the present day. The amount of the first collection is not stated, but in April, 1798, when Mr. Burden, of Coventry, preached a sermon for the benefit of the

Missionary Society, the Church generously responded with a collection of 56*l*.

"It was not till 1814," says Mr. McAll in the Historical Notices, "that an 'auxiliary' to the missionary society was regularly formed in this neighbourhood. On the 9th of August in that year, the ministers and friends who then constituted an 'Association for the counties of Nottingham and Derby,' received at Derby a deputation from London sent purposely to propose the establishment of such an auxiliary. This was consented to, and the Churches of Leicestershire were asked to unite. The result was the institution of an auxiliary society for the three counties, the first annual meeting of which was held at Nottingham, March 28th and 29th, 1815, when discourses were preached by the Rev. James Bennett of Rotherham, and Alexander Waugh, of London. The Rev. John Campbell also delivered a short narrative of his mission to South Africa. The collections made on this occasion in aid of the funds amounted to 146*l*."¹ An account of the fourth of these annual meetings has been preserved in our Church Book:—"On Wednesday morning (March 25th, 1818), the Auxiliary Missionary Society met at Nottingham at half-past nine o'clock, when a report of the proceedings of the past year, and a statement of the accounts was read, and several interesting speeches were delivered. The Rev. Mr. Campbell, from London, preached from Psalm lxviii. 31. In the afternoon about five hundred persons, members

¹ Historical Notices in Bicentenary Volume.

of different Churches in the Union, communicated together at the table of the Lord. At seven o'clock in the evening Mr. Leifchild, from London, closed the public services of this anniversary by preaching from Psalm xlv. 17. The collections made at the conclusion of the various services amounted to 155*l.* 17*s.* 8*d.* The impression produced on the minds of those who were present on this occasion was universally declared to be of the most pleasing and salutary kind, calculated not only to promote missionary zeal, but personal edification and mutual love."¹ Our fathers evidently thought it wise to spend a whole day in the consideration of missionary work, and to engage the services of the foremost preachers. In 1829 this auxiliary was dissolved, and henceforth each county had its own auxiliary.

Mr. Alliott's abiding interest in the missionary cause was recognised when, in 1828, he was asked to preach in Surrey Chapel at the thirty-fourth anniversary of the London Missionary Society. His text was, "Freely ye have received, freely give"—Matt. x. 8; and the burden of his message is revealed in the opening sentences:—"If it should be asked what is the distinguishing characteristic of that dispensation of grace and truth which we enjoy, and which it is the design of this society to communicate to this world, I should reply, its distinguishing characteristic is benevolence. It had its origin in the infinite benevolence of God; for our Lord has

¹ Castle Gate Church Book.

assured us that 'God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.' . . . This gracious purpose of God was carried into effect by the unexampled love of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. . . . It is further to be observed that the principal effect which it is designed to produce on the human mind, and which it does produce, when it becomes the power of God to salvation is the same divine and godlike disposition." Mr. Alliott then dealt at length with (1) our indebtedness to the benevolence of God ; (2) the manner in which our sense of obligation should be expressed, and our debt be discharged, and (3) the application of these considerations to the interests of the missionary society.

During Mr. Alliott's ministry the organisation of the Church was greatly improved. In 1811, Mr. John Newham, a deacon who had discharged the office with great advantage to the Church, passed away. Only one deacon was now left, and the following method of election was adopted. The pastor delivered a discourse on the duties of those who were called to the office, the character they ought to bear, and the qualifications that were necessary. The members then sent by letter to the pastor the names of those whom they deemed worthy. The names of those who appeared from the letters to have a majority of votes were submitted to an adjourned meeting. The brethren then "retired one by one into the table pew," and wrote on a

slip of paper the names of those brethren who were the objects of their choice. In 1828, when three deacons were elected, and the number was for the first time brought up to seven, a different method was adopted. Nomination papers were issued, and when the numbers were counted it was found that Messrs. Richard Preston, Richard Morley, and Thomas Cullen were nominated to the office. These brethren then withdrew from the meeting, and were separately proposed and voted upon. The vote was expressed by the lifting up of the right hand. Some thought it unnecessary to take a show of hands after the nomination had taken place by ballot, but the following reasons were given for adhering to the method: "In the first place because we have reason to believe that in the primitive Churches this mode of election was resorted to, *e.g.*, 2 Cor. viii. 19. The word here translated *chosen* signifies also that the mode of choice was the stretching forth of the hand. Now, although we do not wish to stickle about little things, yet we hesitate in making an election quite a private business which was anciently done openly in the presence of the Church. In the second place, unless the persons ballotted for be afterwards separately proposed and appointed, there is no opportunity for hearing or considering any objection which some might bring against the appointment of a particular individual. In the third place, unless this be done, an individual might be appointed by a very small minority, since, in the case of ballot, if many

candidates were proposed, a very few votes might determine an election.”¹

In spite of the continued prosperity of the Church the membership was not considered by Mr. Alliott proportionate to the congregation. At the quarterly meeting in October, 1817, the pastor referred to the fact that in a congregation of nine hundred or a thousand persons, the Church consisted of less than two hundred members. While the disproportion was common in many Independent Churches, Mr. Alliott nevertheless regarded it as an evil to be deplored, and called upon the Church to consider what measures might be adopted to remedy it. During the next twelve years, the membership rose to three hundred.

In July, 1827, an evening service was established in Castle Gate Church. It was conducted for one year by Mr. Alliott's two sons, Richard and William. After William had left the town, the members, at a special meeting in June, 1828, expressed a desire to “continue the three services on the Lord's Day, and that Mr. Richard Alliott be invited to become assistant to our present minister for that purpose, and others connected with the spiritual welfare of the Church.” This declaration was signed by nearly all the brethren, and a paper expressive of their concurrence was privately signed by a very large majority of the sisters. The partnership thus happily begun was strengthened in the following year when Mr. Alliott proposed that his son should be made

¹ Castle Gate Church Book.



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co-pastor, "having no man like minded who would naturally care" for the Church's state. In his letter of acceptance, Mr. Alliott, jun., reveals the sacred relationship that exists between himself and his father. His father in the flesh to whom he is "bound by ties of natural affection" is also his "father in Christ" to whom he owes, under God, the beginnings of his spiritual life. The ordination service was held on 6th January, 1830, and the following is an extract from the *Nottingham Review* :—"The Rev. Edward Webb, of Leicester, delivered an introductory discourse on the nature and beauty of a Christian Church; after which the Rev. Joseph Gilbert, of Friar Lane Chapel, requested the Church to recognise their call to Mr. Alliott, jun. to the pastoral office. In answer, Mr. Preston, one of the deacons, in the name and by desire of the Church, solemnly renewed their call to Mr. R. Alliott. The young minister, in reply to the questions of Mr. Gilbert, made a public confession of his faith—a statement of his views of the ministerial office—the motives which had led him to engage in it—and his resolves and expectations in the discharge of the duties now about to devolve upon him. The Rev. Richard Alliott, sen., delivered the charge to his son, from Deut. xxxi. 23; and the Rev. R. S. McAll, of Manchester, addressed the Church from Revelation iii. 22." The partnership of these two men, who were related as father and son in a double sense, lasted for ten peaceful and prosperous years; and then the old man

entered into his rest on Easter Sunday, 19th April, 1840. He was in the seventy-second year of his age at the time of his death, and he had ministered to the same Church for nearly forty-six years. At the ordination of his son ten years before, only two members remained of those who had welcomed him when he came to Nottingham, and now he had outlived them all. A son of the manse (his father was the Rev. Richard Alliott, of Coventry), he seems to have added to a mind, thoroughly disciplined by study, a peculiar genius for the pastoral office. Culture, wisdom, and grace were combined in an unusual degree in his ministerial and pastoral work, and he stamped the impress of his personality so deeply on the Church that his influence still abides. At a special meeting of the Church on 17th June, 1840, the following resolution was passed:—"It having pleased Almighty God to remove our senior pastor, the Rev. Richard Alliott, from the Church militant to the Church triumphant, we desire to record our high esteem of his memory and character, and the great goodness of our Heavenly Father in sparing to us his useful and valuable life during the long period of nearly forty-six years, blessing his labours in a very eminent degree, giving him many seals to his ministry, and continuing much peace and prosperity to this Church. The brethren desire also to acknowledge with thankfulness the kind providence of Almighty God in giving them a beloved son of their esteemed pastor, whose united labours with his revered father, have already, through a

period of twelve years, been eminently blessed amongst them; they desire now that he has succeeded to the sole pastorship to express their great attachment and esteem for him, and their heart's desire and prayer is that a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit may rest upon him, and that his labours may be long continued, his usefulness greatly increased, and that the whole of his ministry may be crowned with the Divine blessing."¹

The prayer that Mr. Alliott's labours might be long continued was not answered in relation to Castle Gate. In 1840 the University of Glasgow conferred upon him the degree of Doctor of Laws. In March, 1843, Dr. Alliott accepted an invitation to York Road Chapel, London, and his resignation was received with great regret and reluctance by the Church at Castle Gate, where his zealous and able ministry had been so eminently fruitful. In his letter of resignation, which is full of deep feeling and tender regard, Dr. Alliott thus referred to the result of his labours, "I have now held this office for more than thirteen years, and have ministered amongst you for more than fifteen; it has, through this period, been my endeavour to watch for souls, and, though my duties have been discharged with many imperfections and much weakness, God has been pleased to prosper me; a very large proportion of the Church consists of those whom God has (I believe) given me for my hire; they are my epistles, known and read of all men, and I anticipate the day when

¹ Castle Gate Church Book.

they will constitute my crown of rejoicing in another world." Dr. Alliott afterwards became Principal of Western College.

Two events of an interesting kind which cannot easily be recorded in another chapter belong to this period.

Castle Gate Church was registered for the solemnization of marriages on 18th February, 1837, and the first marriage under the new Act was solemnized on 11th July of the same year, when Miss Matilda Ragg, a member of the Church, was married to Mr. Hodson of Ludlow.

In 1831 the House of Lords rejected the Reform Bill. The news was brought to Nottingham by Pickford, the carrier, and by the mail-coach passengers, on Sunday, 9th October. The scene is described by the graphic pen of one who witnessed it:—"On the morning of the memorable Sunday, October 9th, hundreds assembled before the White Lion, awaiting the arrival of the mail. As the coach drove up a passenger remarked that the Reformers in London were beating to arms. That was enough. The crowd, with wild cries, rushed at the dwellings of supposed anti-reformers and perpetrated lawless deeds. The mayor—Mr. William Wilson—left the service at Castle Gate Chapel and hastened to the multitude. While exhorting them to disperse and refrain from violence he himself was struck and injured. The Riot Act was then read; the constables were, however, unable to seize the chief offenders or make much impression on the

mob.”¹ On the evening of the following day the Castle, owned by a peer who was opposed to the Bill, was burned to the ground. “I can never forget that sight. Beneath, a dense black mass of human beings, more like wild beasts, shrieking and howling; above, columns of smoke through which, after a while, the flames penetrated, lighting up St. James’s Church, Standard Hill, and the whole neighbourhood.”¹

In 1841 the Congregational Union of England and Wales, which had previously met at Bristol and Birmingham, held its autumnal meeting in Nottingham, under the presidency of Dr. Vaughan. The Church Book informs us that more than a hundred ministers from different parts of the country attended. Hospitality was cheerfully provided by the Congregationalists of the city. Meetings of great interest were held in Castle Gate, James Street, and Friar Lane chapels. Private subscriptions to the extent of 40*l.* were sufficient to meet the expenses.

¹ Mrs. Gilbert’s “Recollections of Old Nottingham.”

CHAPTER XIV

SUNDAY SCHOOLS

IN 1783 Robert Raikes, after a three years' experiment, made known to the world the result of his "botanising" among the neglected children of the dark, filthy alleys of Gloucester. After working for years at the heroic but almost hopeless task of trying to reform the prisoners of the Bridewell and Castle goals, he arrived at the conclusion that vice is preventible, and henceforward gave himself to the great Sunday School movement with which his name will be for ever associated. The uncombed, unwashed, ragged children, who had formerly spent their time playing at chuck-farthing, and cursing and swearing in the most horrible manner, became his botanical garden, in which he tried, by patient culture, to turn noxious weeds into fragrant flowers.

In the closing years of the century, the Sunday School movement spread with marvellous rapidity throughout the country. The members of Castle Gate Church caught the inspiration, and in November 1798, started a school for the instruction of children in reading and writing, and in the Christian faith. On 17th February, 1799, the Sunday School Society, which includes the teachers and officers of Castle

Gate school and its various branches, was formed; and in the same year two class-rooms were built over the vestry attached to the chapel at a cost of 154*l.* 19*s.* 4*d.* Before August, 1802, no record was kept of the meetings of the Sunday School Society, but in that month a list of rules, probably in existence from the commencement of the school, was copied into a book in which it has been preserved. Rule IX. states that "Children of every denomination are considered as equally fit objects to receive the benefits of these institutions," and that the parent, guardian, or employer of the child must be present at his admission to the school. Rule XI. gives a vivid picture of the uneducated condition of the children. "The scholars shall be divided into six classes in the following order:—1st Class to consist of those who are learning the alphabet and joining two or three letters; 2nd Class, those who are learning to read and spell lessons consisting of monosyllables; 3rd Class, those who are learning to read and spell words of two syllables; 4th Class, those who can read and spell words of three and four syllables and read in the New Testament; 5th Class, to read in the New Testament, and spell words of five or six syllables; 6th Class, to read in the Bible and spell polysyllables." Watts's first catechism was used in the second and third classes; his second catechism in the fourth and fifth; and the Assembly's catechism in the sixth. The chief object of those who founded the school was "to teach the rising generation to read the Holy Scriptures, and to inculcate the principles of religion and virtue."

They therefore manifested the greatest concern to secure as teachers those whose example should be in accordance with the precepts they taught. One of the rules expressly declares that none were to be admitted to the teaching staff but "such as bear an exceptional moral character, and of whom we have reason to hope that their conduct will ornament, or at least be consistent with the benevolent situation of a Sunday-school teacher." Moreover, it was provided, in Rule XIV. that "if any of us should observe in the conduct of a fellow teacher anything inconsistent with these engagements, we will privately, in Christian love, intimate it to him; but if the person should unhappily persist in such a line of conduct, it shall be stated to the managing committee, that they may endeavour to restore such a one, and if their endeavours are ineffectual, it shall be laid before the society, and submitted to their determination." One amusing result of their watchful care over their teachers appears in the early records. The pastor of the Church, the Rev. Richard Alliott, does not seem to have been at first a member of the Sunday School Society, and it was a rule of the society that an intended teacher should be proposed at one meeting and received at the next. On 17th October, 1813, Mr. Alliott was proposed, and the teachers took a week to inquire into their pastor's character before admitting him to the society! Another evidence of the democratic nature of the society is revealed in the fact that there was no superintendent either in the Castle Gate school or in the

branch schools that were soon formed. There was a president, a vice-president, a treasurer, and, a little later, a secretary; but lest the president should be too fond of office, he was appointed for a month only, and the vice-president, also appointed monthly, regularly succeeded to the office of president. A little later the appointments were extended to two months. The duties of the president are set forth at great length in the rules of the Sunday School Society. It was his business to be "regular and early in his attendance at the schools," to see that the registers of attendance were properly kept, to inform the teachers when it was their turn to sit with the children during divine worship, to deliver a list of absentees to the appointed visitors, and admonish the visitors if they were inclined to be negligent, and, generally, so to maintain the discipline of the school that all things should be done "decently and in order." In the early days of the school the most strenuous methods were adopted to secure the regular attendance of the scholars. One of the rules provides that "two members shall be appointed by the male, and the same number by the female teachers, as visitors. Their duty is to visit the parents or employers of the children named on the president's list of absentees and report the reason why each child was absent; and, if any peculiar cases of distress present themselves, to represent the circumstances to the treasurer of the society's fund for the relief of distressed children." At first the children left school at the age of fifteen

years, but in 1816 classes were formed for adult scholars.

In the end of the eighteenth century the Sunday school was the only institution which provided for the education of the poor. There were grammar schools, and private schools, to which the children of the well-to-do went, but for those in poorer circumstances there were no advantages of education. Hence, those who came to the Sunday school had not only to be taught the moral and spiritual truths of the Bible, but they had first to be taught how to read it. A hundred years ago, the people did not ask either for religious or secular education. They did not feel the need of it, and those who undertook the work had not only to provide the means, but also to create the need. Sunday was the occasion of drunkenness and of cruel sports. Cock fighting was the common amusement of the village green. Religious influences were discredited among the common people. Hence the teachers had to seek out the neglected children of the streets, and to maintain their hold upon them by constant visitation. The Sunday school was a great missionary enterprise. At Castle Gate, no one was admitted to the school who had the advantage of attending a day school during the week. It was to those who were altogether neglected that the founders of the Sunday school solely addressed themselves—the weeds that by careful botanising might be turned into beautiful flowers.

The success of the Sunday school movement at Castle Gate may be judged from the following figures :

On 1st January, 1802, three years after the school was established, there were 126 scholars and 23 teachers. By the end of that year the number of scholars had increased to 141. In 1805 there were 32 teachers. Ninety-five years after the first record of attendance, viz., in 1897, instead of 126, there were 1,394 scholars; and instead of 23, there were 103 teachers.

To meet the increasing attendances, enlarged accommodation was required. Hence, in 1805, a gallery was erected for the boys in the chapel at the cost of 70*l*. In 1815, as we have seen in a former chapter, extensive alterations and improvements were made in the chapel, and the children, who had formerly used the boys' gallery, and also the table pew and the seats adjoining, were compelled to find another habitation. The Church Book thus states the objection to the continued occupation of the church: "After the meeting house was painted and the seats lined, this could no longer be allowed." The use of the Lancastrian school room in Derby Road was obtained at a rent of 10*l*. a year, but it was soon found that the distance rendered this arrangement entirely inconvenient. Hence only a year after expending 1,143*l*. on improving the chapel, the people launched a new building scheme, and the first separate school room was erected in Hounds-gate in 1816 at a cost of 371*l*., and was opened on 1st December of the same year. The ground rent was eight guineas per annum. It is interesting to find the following record of the undertaking:—

“Received 25*l.* 5*s.* 5*d.*, being the teachers’ subscriptions to the new schools.” The receipt is signed by Mr. Peacock.

That the teachers were filled with the true missionary spirit is shown by the number of branch schools that sprang from the parent tree. In the year 1807 they desired to establish a branch school at Wollaton, and the following brief memorandum tells the disappointing result:—“The president and others having reported to the society that a school cannot be opened at Wollaton owing chiefly to the opposition that may be expected from Lord Middleton, it was resolved to abandon the undertaking.” Opposition of this kind was common throughout the country. The Sunday school movement was by many regarded with fear and suspicion. “Prejudices against teaching the children of the poor grew rapidly, and at last became so strong that the great Mr. Pitt seriously intended to make it a State question, and introduce a bill into Parliament for the suppression of Sunday schools. The enemies to education coupled Sunday school teaching with open-air preaching; and the Pitt ministry, acting in what they supposed to be the interest of the Established Church, wished to put down both by law.”¹ In spite, however, of distrust and opposition, the Sunday school had come to stay, and those who had taken part in the movement refused to be silenced. Thwarted by Lord Middleton, the Castle Gate teachers, meeting on 9th August, 1807,

¹ “Robert Raikes,” by J. Henry Harris.

immediately passed a resolution to open a school at Bulwell, and the work was begun on the following Sunday. They sent four of their number in regular rotation to Bulwell. The school there met from nine o'clock to twelve in the morning for its regular work, and from two to a quarter-past three in the afternoon for a preaching service. As the four teachers were obliged to walk to and from Bulwell, and it was impossible to return between the services, the Castle Gate school generously paid 10*l.* a year to provide dinner for them at Bulwell. At first the school met in a hired room, but the following extracts from the Church minute book show the spirit of enterprise with which the work was carried forward:—“1st March, 1809. At a meeting of the brethren of the Church, it being represented that the place where the school is kept at Bulwell is very inconvenient and uncomfortable, it was thought expedient to use our endeavours to procure another place in that way which was best calculated to answer the end proposed. A committee was appointed to attend to this business, and who from time to time are to make report of their proceedings to the Church, which is now engaged to carry on this work.”¹ “14th July, 1809. The committee for Bulwell informed the Church that they had purchased a piece of land, and agreed with workmen to erect a building for the purpose of teaching the children of the poor, and also for carrying on the worship of God; and it was proposed that a subscription should

¹ Castle Gate Church Book.

be set on foot in the congregation for defraying this expense.”¹ “10th October, 1809. At the quarterly meeting the committee for Bulwell reported to the Church that the building was erected and got into use; that the whole of the expense would be under 250*l.*, and that a subscription had been begun by the teachers of the schools, which, being carried on in the congregation, amounted to 150*l.*, to which it was proposed to make such an addition from the funds of the school as should reduce the debt to 70*l.* in the present year; and to apply such sums yearly as the funds will bear; by which means it is hoped the whole will very soon be paid.”¹ The school prospered greatly for a number of years, till the very success of the Sunday school movement led to its decay. Local friends were stirred up to do their duty, and on 10th November, 1816, the Castle Gate School at Bulwell was closed “because there are now plenty of other schools there.” A friendly arrangement was made with Mr. Stanford, and the scholars were handed over to his school. The school building was sold in 1821 for the sum of 130*l.* In the accounts of the year 1808, the following items appear:—

		£	s.	d.
14th Sept.	Candles and candlesticks at Bulwell	.	0	12 8
4 Nov.	Do. Do.	.	0	12 8
	Lantern and oil	.	0	4 0
3 Dec.	Rent, coals, &c. at Bulwell from 13 Dec.			
	1807 to 3 July, 1808	.	4	2 0
	Ditto, from 3 July to 3 Dec.	.	2	4 8
24 Dec.	Mr. George Shipstone for boarding, &c.,			
	at Bulwell	.	0	18

¹ Castle Gate Church Book.

J. W.
HASKARD.



W. E.
SISLING.



ARTHUR
ARMITAGE



SUNDAY SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS.

Several accounts for "horse-hire to Bulwell" appear from time to time in the records, *e.g.*, "Mr. Peacock—horse-hire to Bulwell, four journeys, 10s."; "Mr. Dunn, for horse-hire to Bulwell, 11s."

After the closing of the Bulwell school, the missionary zeal of the teachers broke out in a new direction, and in 1817 a school was founded at Basford. In the first year thirty children were in attendance, but the number rose to seventy-two after one year's work. This school appears to have been closed in 1821, probably because the necessities of the village were met by local effort. In 1822 a school was started at Hyson Green, or "Ison" Green, as it was then called. In the first year it was attended by one hundred and twenty-four scholars, and the movement eventually resulted in the formation of a Church. This and later efforts, which became permanent, will be dealt with in another chapter.

In the early account book of the Castle Gate school several items of interest are to be found. On 4th Nov., 1802, four candlesticks cost 5s.; 9s. 6d. were paid for quills on 6th June, 1805. On 5th Dec., 1811, 12s. were paid for 500 pencils, and 6s. for "easy lesson and spelling books." Two writing-desks were purchased for 16s. in 1801. In addition to reading and writing, the account book shows that singing was also taught. Thus on 29th March, 1803, Mr. Womsley received 5s., and on 16th May, 7s. "for teaching singing;" while on 8th Aug. 4s. were paid "for new tune-book." The destitute condition of many of the children is indicated in the following

items:—7th Oct., 1803, “for the girls’ caps, £1 6s. ;” 2nd Jan., 1804, “for shoes, 13s. 2d. ;” 12th July, 1804, “for shoes, 12s. ;” 20th Feb., 1807, “for a frock for one of the scholars,” 4s. 4d. The necessity for stern discipline is evidenced by these suggestive entries: 13th Dec., 1802, “12 canes, 1s. ;” 4th Oct., 1804, “for canes and wafers, 1s. ;” 7th Oct., 1804, “for canes, 6d.” Apparently the boys needed special attention in that month of October.

The following “Rules for the Children” were drawn up by the Castle Gate school in the first years of the nineteenth century:—

“1. Be present at school at nine o’clock in the morning and half-past one o’clock in the afternoon.

“2. Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy. This is commanded by the great God who is your Maker and will be your Judge.

“3. Walk orderly to and from school so that the careless and ignorant may be instructed by your example.

“4. In the hours of teaching be silent, and always attend to your teachers.

“5. Behave with particular reverence in time of singing praise and of prayer to God, and attend diligently to the sermon.

“6. Fear and serve the great and merciful God at all times, and remember that His eye is upon you both day and night.

“7. Never tell a lie; speak no bad words, and avoid the company of those who do.

“8. Pray to God morning and evening that He

may give you His blessing and keep you from all evil.

“9. Love and honour your parents, and obey your master or teacher.

“10. Be kind to everybody about you, and always do as you would be done unto.

“11. Never forget that you are sinners, every one of you, and that Jesus Christ has mercifully invited you to come to Him that He may pardon and save you.

“12. Take care that you practise every day of the week the good things you learn on the Sabbath.”

Accompanying those rules is a note to parents, affectionately entreating them, as they value their own happiness, and that of their offspring, to assist the efforts of the Sunday school teachers by taking care that their children observe the rules, and especially by setting them such an example as it will be for their happiness to follow.

Reference has already been made to the monthly and bi-monthly election of president in the early days of the Sunday school. The democratic constitution of the School Society is further illustrated in the following rule:—“The president, absenting himself from the school, at monthly meetings, monthly examinations, &c., on Sabbath days, unless the vice-president be present to fill up his place, shall forfeit 6*d.* Any member of the committee shall be empowered to fine the president for neglect of duty.” Teachers were fined 2*d.* for “absenting themselves on Sabbath days.” There was apparently some difficulty in securing the forfeits, for we find

that the teachers, on the 28th Sept., 1802, resolved, "that the forfeits, having been for some time past very slightly attended to, shall be again put into full force of execution." For staying away from the bi-monthly meeting, save on account of illness or absence from town "on business of importance," a teacher forfeited 6*d*. No holidays or "week-ends" were recognised in those days! On the 19th July, 1802, among the receipts of the school, an entry is made to the following effect:—"To A. Strachan for balance of forfeits, 1*l*." This source of revenue, however, did not long continue. In spite of the above drastic resolutions, the teachers, on 30th Aug., 1803, agreed "that the regulations now in force respecting forfeits be totally set aside." If the majority of teachers were occasional defaulters, it would clearly be difficult to enforce the law. When forfeits failed, remonstrance was tried. On 27th Oct., 1807, the following curious minute occurs:—"It appearing to the society that the president's office has been much neglected, it is resolved that any two members of the society are empowered to remonstrate with the president or vice-president on any neglect of duty, and if that neglect is repeated, they are further empowered to call a meeting of the society, when, if it shall appear that either the president or vice-president has so neglected the duties of his situation, he shall be dismissed from the office and another appointed." At the same meeting it was resolved "that it is the president's, or in his absence the vice-president's, duty to

reprove the teachers for any neglect of duty, and if such neglect is persisted in, it is his duty to lay the matter before the Society, who shall determine on such a case in that manner which shall most promote the benefit of the individual and the good of the Institution."

We have seen that canes were used to maintain the discipline of the school. The children were coaxed as well as caned. Rewards were given to girls who became proficient in sewing, for which a class was held during the week. A psalm and hymn book was presented to every scholar who could repeat the whole of the Assembly's catechism. A printed ticket was given on Sunday afternoon to each child who "attended in proper time and behaved well both parts of the day." At the end of the quarter ten of these tickets entitled the possessor to 3*d.*, and thirteen to 6*d.* A ticket was given on Saturday evening to those children who attended the singing in proper time, and 1*d.* was awarded to each child who, at the close of the month, had four of these tickets.

A large part of the funds necessary for carrying on the work of the school was received at the annual public examination of the scholars in Bible knowledge. At the close of the examination, which was conducted by specially chosen teachers, a sermon was preached to the people. In 1804, the collection taken at the doors after the examination amounted to 45*l.* 17*s.* 7*d.* In the following year, when Mr. Alliot preached, the school received 48*l.* 18*s.* 2*d.*

The public examination, followed by a sermon, was gradually merged into the present day Anniversary Services. The anniversary collections have varied from 35*l.* to 80*l.* Among the special preachers who have conducted the services the following may be mentioned:—Rev. Samuel Martin, London; Rev. George Smith, London; Rev. Dr. Alliott, Western College, Plymouth; Rev. Dr. Wardlaw, Glasgow; Rev. Thomas Binney, London; Rev. Dr. Conder, Leeds; Rev. Newman Hall, London; Rev. Dr. Stoughton, London; Rev. Dr. Henry Allon, London; Rev. James Parsons, York; Rev. Dr. Enoch Mellor, Halifax; Rev. Dr. Clement Clemance, London; Rev. L. D. Bevan, LL.B., London; Rev. A. Hannay, London; Principal Caleb Scott, Lancashire College; Dr. R. W. Dale, Birmingham; Principal Simon, D.D., Spring Hill College; Rev. J. Hudson Taylor, D.D., of China; Rev. R. F. Horton, M.A., D.D., London; Principal Cave, D.D., Hackney College; Rev. J. H. Jowett, M.A., Birmingham; Rev. B. J. Snell, M.A., B.Sc., London; Rev. W. Hardy Harwood, London; Professor E. Armitage, M.A., United College, Bradford; Rev. J. Ossian Davies, Bournemouth; Rev. Silas K. Hocking, London; Rev. G. Campbell Morgan, D.D., London; Rev. C. Silvester Horne, M.A., London; Rev. R. Baldwin Brindley, Croydon; Rev. Principal Ritchie, Congregational Institute, Nottingham.

In 1848 the jubilee of the Sunday school was celebrated by the erection of a much larger school building in Houndsgate. It was built on the site

of the old school, with some additional ground. The new school, as it was then called, was the best in the town. The cost was 1,243*l.*; of this sum 1,000*l.* was subscribed at the time, and the balance was wiped off in a few years. It seemed as if all reasonable requirements had now been met, and that the school would serve its purpose for at least a generation. The Rev. Samuel McAll once said that "really they were so perfect that if they had to be built again he did not see in what way they could be improved upon." Ten years had not passed away, however, when a great need for class-rooms was felt and expressed. The Church, however, soon became engaged in building the present chapel, and the Sunday-school teachers had to bide their time. But while they waited they worked. The Houndsgate school was full. Some old cottages near the chapel were used as class-rooms. Mr. Gayton's young men's class went up two flights of old and almost perpendicular stairs to a room with bare, whitewashed, flaky walls and black floor. Several of the young women's classes were accommodated in similar rooms. The ascent to the class-room reminded one teacher of the ascent of Mount Vesuvius, not only because of its steepness, but also because of the smoke that was almost always to be found at the top. In the school itself the superintendent and secretary had no private room unless they used either the kitchen or the coal-house. To meet this state of things various plans were suggested. "The late Mr. Alexander Alliott," says one of the teachers of the time, "once threw

out a vision of the room enlarged, the walls raised, and a gallery round, and many other suggestions were made, but all came to nought, and Mr. Alliott went down to his grave in 1870, having done a noble work in connection with the rebuilding of the chapel, but without living to see anything done for the schools.



SUNDAY SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS.

CHAPTER XV

SUNDAY SCHOOLS—(*continued*)

ABOUT the year 1874 the movement for increased school accommodation again took life. A narrow block of old property running parallel with the west side of the chapel was purchased for 1,200*l.* by Mr. Arthur Wells and Mr. J. B. Alliot, for the purpose of meeting the long-felt need for class-rooms. It was found, however, that the property was wide enough for only a single long row of class-rooms, which could be connected with one corner of the main schoolroom. The scheme could not be considered satisfactory, and the matter was again held in abeyance. A year or two later, Mr. William E. Sisling took a deep and practical interest in the scheme. His dream was an entirely new building on the west side of the chapel. To carry it out it was necessary to buy more property adjoining the narrow strip already secured. The house on which he set his eyes was occupied by Dr. Snell. The idea was as yet a secret, but it was essential at the outset to know the exact size and shape of the land. For this purpose, a true friend was found in Mr. Arthur Brown, a former scholar, and then in the office of the borough engineer; and one dark night,

armed with a long tape measure, and accompanied by the superintendent and the secretary, he very quietly but very carefully took full measurements of the property.

In an address delivered apparently to the teachers in June, 1800, Mr. Sisling revealed the kind of building on which his heart was set, and asked the teachers to help to realise the "bright prospect." "Suppose a well-lighted and ventilated room, with gallery, capable of seating double the present number; separate infants' room, teachers' and Dorcas room; young men's room; twenty or twenty-two class-rooms; library and secretary's room, and also a room for the superintendent, whoever he may be, where he may arrange, prepare for, and do his work better than it is now done—would not this be something worth working for, something worth giving for? Should we all like a building like this? If so, ought not we to be more interested, more earnest, more anxious than anyone else?"

Mr. Arthur Brown generously prepared plans of this dream-building, showing the size and number of rooms, and carefully estimating the cost. The next step was to try to convince the friends who had suggested the long row of class-rooms that the new plan of the central hall, with class-rooms round it, was the better. One evening, superintendent and secretary went to Cavendish Hill to confer with Mr. Arthur Wells. They convinced him that the idea was the worthier one, and from that hour the

scheme took new life. The matter was brought before the Church; a building committee was appointed; the pastor, the Rev. John Bartlett, became a warm advocate of the scheme, and aroused great enthusiasm in its favour. The various properties required to carry out the plan were secured, though not without difficulty. The teachers met and agreed to attempt to raise 1,000*l.* in the school in five years. A definite plan of regular contributions in each class was willingly and almost enthusiastically adopted, and the first subscriptions were given on 25th January, 1880. "At last," says our chronicler, "Mr. Parry, a former teacher, had prepared all plans and working drawings; legal matters were arranged, and March, 1882 was reached. Mr. Arthur Wells had taken a deep interest in the work all this time, his sympathies were fully with us, and he was prepared for almost any expense. When the first estimates were opened, they were between 2,000*l.* and 3,000*l.* too high. Disappointment fell on all the committee. 'What shall we do now?' said a desponding committee-man. 'Why, go on, of course,' said Mr. Wells. The plans were modified; new estimates were obtained; the contract was prepared, but Mr. Wells had been taken ill, sank quickly, and on the very day on which the contract to build was signed, he died. This was a great shock, but Mr. Bartlett preached a sermon showing that our trust was not to be in men, but in God; and so the work went forward."

The site was cleared, the rock caves described in

a former chapter were filled up with the bricks of the old buildings, and on 29th June, 1882, the foundation stone was laid. In his statement on behalf of the Building Committee, Mr. R. Steele thus described the new building:—"On the ground floor a large lecture hall, an infant school, eight class rooms, a library, and superintendent's room. On the first floor eight class rooms, a young men's room, and a church parlour fronting Castle Gate, with all necessary convenience. On the second floor, and fronting Castle Gate, are three large class rooms. Total on the ground floor, twelve rooms; first floor, ten rooms; second floor, three rooms; total, twenty-five rooms. The cost of purchasing the whole of the premises (including the conversion of Houndsgate leasehold into a freehold), is 3,600*l.*, which has been paid. We felt that this undertaking was absolutely essential to the continued prosperity of our schools, while, at the same time, the Church and congregation will be supplied with that amount of room and comfort for its various meetings for works of goodness and benevolence." In undertaking this work, the Building Committee felt that they had to look at the subject broadly, and not to build just as much as would meet the exigencies of the present hour, but to anticipate the possible requirements of a coming generation. After a statement by Mr. Thorpe, the joint-treasurer of the fund, and an address by the pastor, the Rev. John Bartlett, the foundation stone was laid by Mr. J. B. Alliott, with these words: "In the name

of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, I lay this stone as a memorial that the building of which it forms a part is intended to be used for the purpose or spreading abroad a knowledge of Him, of His power, of His love, and of His laws." After a dedicatory prayer, by the Rev. E. Medley, B.A., sixty children of the congregation came up and laid on the stone bags of money amounting to 110*l.* 7*s.* 6¼*d.* These were followed by scholars selected from each class in the school, who placed on the stone 121*l.*, contributed in weekly offerings by the classes. To show the interest taken by some of the children, Mr. Bartlett mentioned that that morning a little box had been sent to the secretary, which contained farthings collected by a little girl who had died since the scheme was started. The schools have proved to be admirably suited to their purpose, and few Free Churches can boast of a better equipment in this respect. The total cost was over 12,000*l.*

The Sunday school has had a succession of able superintendents and devoted teachers. The election of bi-monthly presidents ceased after about thirty years, and Mr. William Peacock became superintendent. In the course of an address delivered at the Centenary Celebration in 1898, Mrs. Philips, a daughter of the Rev. Samuel McAll, characterised Mr. Peacock as "a fine old gentleman" with "a very gentle, persuasive manner." "He could not collar a boy and turn him out. He would lay his hand on the boy's shoulders, and speak to him very

gently. Often had he brought tears to a boy's eyes by the gentle way in which he remonstrated with him when he was wayward and troublesome." One little peculiarity of the old man was thus delightfully pictured by Mrs. Phelps:—"We teachers then had to wage war against a habit the children had of bringing sweets to school. Mr. Peacock, however, had a great weakness for toffee! Almost always in the afternoon he used to have a piece of toffee to eat; and sometimes, when he came round to mark the names, he would forget that he had not finished his toffee, and it was very difficult to reprove the children when even the superintendent went so far as to show that he was eating toffee himself." After him came Mr. Arthur Wells, to whose deep interest in the Sunday school reference has already been made. At the opening of the Houndsgate schoolrooms in 1848, Mr. Wells traced the history of the school during the half century of its existence, and his death, on the eve of the opening of the present schools, in 1882, was deeply felt by all who knew his love for Sunday-school work, and his active interest in the building scheme.

Mr. Wells was succeeded in the office of superintendent by Mr. Alexander Alliott, son of the Rev. Richard Alliott, who had been minister of Castle Gate for the long period of forty-six years. In presenting a portrait of Mr. Alliott to the Sunday school, his daughter, Mrs. Thorpe, wrote: "I well remember how he used to start off early on Sunday morning with some sandwiches in his pocket for dinner,

having arranged for tea at the school, so that he did not return until after the evening service." Mr. Alliot continued his self-denying labours as superintendent till 1866, and remained a deacon of the Church till his death in 1870. Mr. J. W. Haskard held the office for ten years, and resigned in 1876. He is described as "indefatigable, earnest, always to be relied on, instant in season and out of season." After him came Mr. W. E. Sisling, who held office till 1886. The preceding records show that he was the prime mover in the agitation for the new school buildings. Both in the Church and in the school he was a ceaseless advocate of suitable accommodation for the classes, and he never rested till he saw his dream realised in the present beautiful buildings. Over the scholars he exercised a marvellous influence. Under the gentle touch of his hand the wildest boy was subdued. He had the gift of graphic speech, and the soft quiet voice secured instant attention. In 1886 Mr. Arthur Armitage, the present superintendent, was called to office at a very early age. For nearly twenty years he has amply justified the confidence of the teachers, and his devotion and ability have given him a secure place in their esteem. He has turned aside from many a prospect of public service and honour in order to minister to the children.

A note occurs in the Church Book, which it may be of interest to reproduce here. "On 28th June, 1838, the day of the coronation of Queen Victoria, the children of the Sabbath schools connected with

this Church assembled in the market place at ten o'clock, and having walked in procession with the mayor, aldermen, councillors, and numerous other gentlemen, together with the children of various other Sabbath schools, they arrived at Castle Gate meeting a little after eleven and occupied the galleries, whilst a respectable congregation was collected in the body of the chapel. On this occasion the Rev. R. Alliott, junr., after singing, read Romans xiii., and commended the Queen and the country in prayer to God. He then preached from 2 Kings, xi. 12. After service, the children were regaled with roast beef and plum pudding in the meeting yard. The friends who witnessed the entertainment were very much pleased both with the conduct of the children and with the gratification they seemed to experience."¹

It is impossible to estimate the influence of the Sunday school. Many of the children are drawn into Church membership, and in their turn become teachers. Others pass entirely out of the knowledge of the teachers, and it is impossible to follow their future careers. We believe, however, that many a seed of truth germinates after long years of inactivity, and that the influence of a devoted teacher can never altogether pass out of a scholar's life. But it is gratifying sometimes to listen to the whole-hearted acknowledgment of good received, and this chapter may fitly be brought to a close by the following beautiful testimony. At the centenary of the Sunday

¹ Castle Gate Church Book,

schools, the Rev. Wm. Crosby, whose name is fragrant among the Congregational Churches in our land, said, "I was one of the Castle Gate Sunday School teachers fifty years ago at the celebration of the Jubilee of the school. Two years before that time—fifty-two years ago—I was a Castle Gate Sunday school teacher. There were seven of us, who, I believe, went from this Sunday school to study for the Christian ministry. That is a noteworthy fact in the history of this school. I am here to-night, perhaps almost alone, representing that distant time and that generation of Sunday school teachers, to acknowledge before God, and in the presence of this assembly, with deepest feeling and profoundest gratitude, my indebtedness to Castle Gate Sunday school and to Castle Gate Church. One of the specialities of my ministry has been work among children and young people, and I got at Castle Gate not a little of the love and preparation for that great work."

CHAPTER XVI

THE REV. SAMUEL MCALL

THE Rev. Dr. Alliott preached his farewell sermon on Sunday, 16th April, 1843, and for the first time in fifty years the Church had to look round for a new minister. The difficulty of finding a suitable successor to the Alliotts was recognised, and at a Church meeting on 5th July, presided over by Mr. R. Morley, the deacons expressed "their great anxiety and their determination to use their best endeavours to procure a minister whom the Church would willingly approve of as their future minister." Taking counsel of their late beloved pastor, Dr. Alliott, they turned their eyes to the Rev. Samuel McAll, of Doncaster. Mr. McAll had a previous connection with Nottingham. When leaving college, thirteen years before this time, he had received a call to settle at St. James's Street chapel, and in the interval he had been frequently requested to visit the town on public occasions. In 1841 he had conducted the Sunday school anniversary services at Castle Gate. At the invitation of the deacons, Mr. McAll occupied the pulpit on 30th April—a fortnight after Dr. Alliott's farewell. This led to the request that he should "supply the pulpit



REV. SAMUEL McALL.

for two Sabbaths at his earliest convenience." At a largely attended meeting on 8th August, the following statement was read by the deacons:—"At the last Church meeting, the deacons were desired to invite the Rev. Samuel McAll, of Doncaster, to supply our pulpit for two weeks. The public services during that time were well attended. Feeling as we do the greatest anxiety for the welfare and prosperity of the Church, and the deep responsibility resting upon us under present circumstances, we have given the subject our most serious consideration, and every enquiry we have made fully confirms us in the opinion we have unanimously come to—that looking at the numbers, ages, and circumstances of the various members of the Church, and taking into consideration the great need, at the present time, of an able and well-qualified minister to support the interest of Dissenters in Nottingham and the county, we do most earnestly recommend the Rev. Samuel McAll as a man eminently qualified in every respect for the important duties which we wish our minister to discharge to our own Church, congregation, town and neighbourhood; and do hope, under the blessing of the Almighty, if the Church agree to invite him to become their pastor, and he accepts the invitation, that the most delightful results will follow." The members of the Church unanimously agreed to this recommendation: a memorial was signed by them, while another was signed by the members of the congregation. Two considerations seem to have helped Mr. McAll to reach his decision. The first was the

unanimity of the call, to which he thus refers :—"It was with mingled surprise and gratitude I first learned from your esteemed deacons that with a unanimity seldom witnessed in our Churches, you desired me to take the oversight of you in the Lord. The large numbers, and the varieties of ages and conditions in life which marked your body, made me surprised and thankful, whatever the issue might be, that God had given me such favour in the eyes of His people." The second consideration was the approval of Dr. Alliott. "It has weighed not a little with me that the desire for my settlement amongst you first arose in the breast of one who of all men doth 'naturally care for your state.' One whose rare attainments have been eclipsed by the simplicity of his devotedness, and who, though able to dazzle you by his learning, preferred to preach 'not himself, but Christ Jesus the Lord.' Hitherto I have been called to lay the foundations, but now I go to build upon another man's, of things made ready to my hand.' On 19th August the call was accepted, and on Sunday, 8th October, Mr. McAll began his ministry by preaching 'a very faithful discourse' on Acts x. 29: 'I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me?'"

During Mr. McAll's most fruitful pastorate of more than sixteen years several interesting events took place. Detailed reference will be found in other chapters, to the building of the Sunday school rooms in Houndsgate in 1848, the extinction of the debt on the chapel at Hyson Green in 1854,

and the founding of Albion Chapel, Sneinton, in 1855. The first of these dates marks the jubilee of the Sunday school, which was commemorated in the following manner. A special service of prayer and thanksgiving was held on Thursday morning, 16th November, at seven o'clock. On the following Tuesday evening there was a public tea meeting; on Wednesday evening Dr. Alliott, of London, preached; and on Thursday the teachers gave a tea to the parents of the Sunday school scholars. The bicentenary of the Church was celebrated in 1865. The Rev. Dr. Alliott preached on the morning of Sunday, 7th October, on "The rise of British Congregationalism"; and Mr. McAll, in the evening, on the history of Castle Gate Church. The sermons were published in a volume entitled "An Historical Account of the Congregational Church worshipping in Castle Gate Meeting House, Nottingham."

Soon after Mr. McAll's settlement, the women received enfranchisement in the Church. The quarterly meetings of the *brethren only* were discontinued, and henceforth the business of the Church was transacted at a monthly meeting of the members of both sexes. In November, 1847 the meeting house was lighted with gas for the first time. The cost of the fittings was about 67*l*.

A new trust deed was prepared in 1854, and twelve trustees were appointed. And here it may be mentioned that the trust deeds of Castle Gate Church are entirely free from all doctrinal clauses. The first, which is dated 20th December, 1689, is

a simple conveyance from Thomas Wright to the Rev. John Ryther, and five others, of the meeting house, garden, and all appurtenances belonging thereto on payment of 65*l.*, on condition that when three of the trustees died the remaining three should fill up the vacancies within one month. Neither this nor any subsequent deed for more than a hundred years declares the purpose for which the meeting house and premises were to be used. In 1796 there are two deeds, one a lease dated 3rd June, and the other a release dated 4th June. This conveyance by means of a lease and release was an old method used for transferring real property. The release is the principal document. This deed of 4th June, 1796, requires the trustees and their survivors to "permit and suffer said meeting house, with the appurtenances to be for ever used, occupied, and enjoyed as and for a meeting house or place for the worship and service of God by the Church, society, or congregation of Protestant dissenters, called or known by the name of Castle Gate Church, society, or congregation." It further requires them to permit the minister and his successors from time to time, and at all times thereafter, to preach in, and use the meeting house for the celebration of Divine worship when and so often and at such days and times as they shall think proper. This Church has therefore never been obliged to square its faith with a creed outworn, but is in the happy position of being able, without fear, to accept John Robinson's advice to the Pilgrim Fathers and be ready to receive

whatever light and truth might in future break forth from God's holy word.

The burial ground attached to the chapel apparently became overcrowded. In 1851 the Church decided that no one becoming connected with the congregation after that time should thereby acquire any right of burial, and that no grave or vault should be opened for any person already connected with the Church unless a near relative was interred therein. In 1856 an order was received from the Council Office, Whitehall, stating that from and after the first of July of that year burials should be discontinued, except in "family vaults" and "walled graves."

During Mr. McAll's ministry the Scots Greys were stationed in the Castle, and Mr. McAll was chosen to be their chaplain. He went every Sunday morning and held service in the Riding School. The hearty singing of the metrical Psalms by the stalwart sons of the north is still remembered by those who were privileged to hear it. When the regiment were about to leave for the Crimean War a memorable service was conducted in the Market Place by Mr. McAll, and there the men bade farewell to their beloved chaplain before going out to face the Russian guns.

Among the outstanding features of Mr. McAll's ministry were his lectures delivered at the monthly united service of the Nonconformist churches. A volume of these and other discourses was published in 1850. One of the sermons delivered at the ordination of his nephew, the Rev. R. W. McAll, of Sunderland, reveals the secret of the power of his

own ministry. The title is significant: "God's Presence Everything to the Christian minister." A few sentences culled from the discourse will lay bare the heart of this man of God. How well he knew the dangers of the ministerial calling! "A minister is, like other men, liable to spiritual declension. His hope of mercy, his faith in things unseen, his desires after holiness, may languish and be ready to die. Though not a hypocrite, he may become a declining Christian, knowing what is 'the joy of the Lord' only by a faint recollection. Secondary motives—regard to appearances, to consequences, and the like—may scarcely suffice to keep him from an open fall. He may correctly describe, as a matter of theory and routine, the believer's enjoyments; but his teaching and his experience have long parted company."¹ How well he knew the secret of power! "Often does a man whose ordinary, if not main, dependence is on 'variety' and power in the pulpit—who is fertile in expedients, and fond of novelty—a man praised for his gifts, and almost living on applause—look with wonder on the greater success of some humble fellow-labourer, who mainly differs from himself in this, that *he is more upon his knees*. Sinners find it hard to resist the appeals of a man truly devoted. His arguments will be persuasive where 'the tongue of the learned' would have wearied itself in vain. . . . To him belongs the 'eloquent silence' of a patient, a holy consistency. He *shines* when he does not *speak*."¹

¹ McAll's Monthly Lectures.

Mr. McAll impressed his message deeply on the receptive minds and hearts of the young. After the slow flight of fifty years, sermons and sayings are treasured still in the memories of those who survive. On one occasion he appealed to those Christians who stood outside the Church, and one sentence still flashes from the mind of a hearer: "If you could find a *perfect* Church, you would join *that*; but would it be a perfect Church after it had received *you*?" A young girl, driven from her own Church by bitter dissensions, and losing faith for a time in all the Churches, was induced to attend Castle Gate by her companions, who spoke all the week about their minister and their Sunday-school teachers. She took a sitting in the back gallery at 1s. 6d. By-and-by she got a front pew at 3s. Still she hesitated, believing all the Churches to be wrong. But Mr. McAll's appeals, coupled with his great kindness to a friend whom he visited every day during an illness, at last won her. She became a member, and still treasures the memory of the hymn that was sung at her reception:—

"High heaven, that heard that solemn vow,
That vow renewed shall daily hear:
Till in life's latest hour I bow,
And bless in Death a bond so dear."

One of the survivors of this period declares that Mr. McAll knew all the poor folks in the streets around the chapel, and that of his goodness and benevolence it is simply impossible to say enough. "He gave away money till he had nothing left to

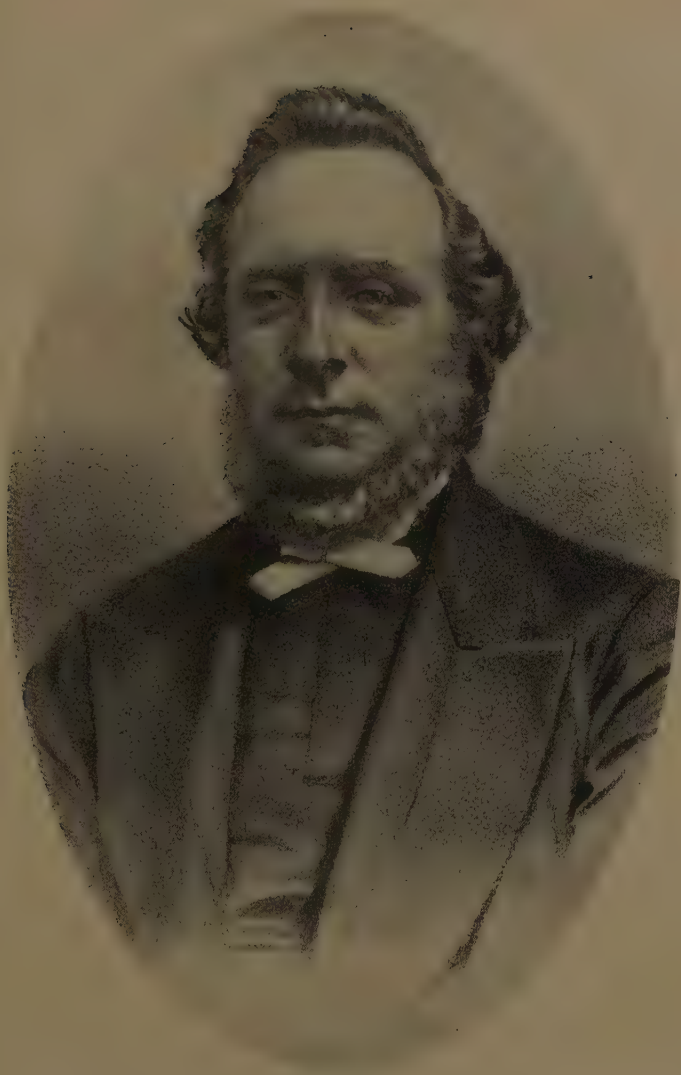
himself." It was not alone in gifts, however, that he showed his regard for his poor neighbours. He gave himself. He understood human nature, and could deal with it in all its aspects. "He could, by looking at you, tell what was passing through your mind." Above all, he had learned the secret of power in the presence of God. A fellow-minister describes him as "an excellent preacher and an assiduous pastor, a man of high principles and devoted piety, prudent and right tempered, and withal a gentlemanly and accomplished man." His manse in Castle Gate was a beautiful example of what a Christian home should be. All his children were teachers in the Sunday-school, and his three sons became ministers. One of his daughters, Mrs. Philps, speaking at the centenary of the Sunday school, said:—"I should be untrue to the very holiest memories of my life if this night did not take me back to my childhood's days and to the home in Nottingham where I was brought up. A dear friend has said to me to-night that once my father, in speaking to him, said: 'If ever there is a place which is heaven upon earth to me it is my home.' Oh, friends, I can echo that to-night! If ever there was a heaven upon earth it was that place in Castle Gate where the five of us gathered round our father and mother; but of that company of seven, only two of us are now left upon earth. The rest are all gone. Looking back upon that time, I cannot recall from my father or mother a single word or action that I wish unsaid or undone."

In December, 1859, Mr. McAll received an invitation to become theological tutor of Hackney College, London, and on January 31st, 1860, he resigned his charge. His feelings in severing his connection with the Church may be gathered from his own words: "In thus divesting myself of the pastoral office, I make a sacrifice which I cannot imagine will ever be repaid. To a minister, situated as I have been, his people are a 'joy and crown.' But it has been the opinion of almost all whom I have consulted that the sacrifice *ought* to be made, with a view to the general interests of the denomination. . . . Swiftly, to myself, have these years of our happy connection passed, and I can scarcely hope, in the future of my life, to have occasion to erect *another* Ebenezer such as I now dedicate to Him who has been my helper and yours."

CHAPTER XVII

ENLARGING HER BORDERS

IN choosing a successor to Mr. McAll, the Church was again guided by Dr. Alliott, who recommended one of his old students, the Rev. Clement Clemance, B.A., of Teignmouth, Devonshire. Mr. Clemance had been but three years in the ministry, and it was only after lengthened and anxious consideration that he agreed to accept the hearty and unanimous call of Castle Gate Church. "It is no trifling matter," he wrote, "to follow, in the case of a Church, one of such varied and extensive acquirements, and of such ripened experience, as your late devoted pastor. Three years' experience can be no substitute for thirty." With great prudence, the young minister determined to make a thorough study of the Church's position and needs before committing himself to any special plan of work. "I shall deem it my special duty for several months rather to inquire and observe, to ascertain the materials for work in the Church, to note its varied organisations, to see what needs to be done and how best to do it. By thus cautiously observing at first I hope to be able to form plans of work more definitely adapted to the requirements of the Church and congregation than if, without such previous observation, I commenced all kinds of work



REV. CLEMENT CLEMANCE, B.A., D.D.

at once." In recommending Mr. Clemance, Dr. Alliott told the friends at Castle Gate that one of the first things they must do for him was to provide a new place of worship. Mr. Clemance himself soon felt that this was necessary to the continued progress of the Church. He began his ministry on Sunday, 15th September, 1860, and at the recognition service on 29th October his predecessor, the Rev. Samuel McAll, delivered an address on the Christian Ministry, the Rev. J. Matheson offered the recognition prayer, and the Rev. J. Wild gave an address on the duties of a Christian Church. About a couple of months after his ordination the following significant resolutions were passed at a Church meeting:—"That a company of brethren be organised to invite strangers to the House of God," and "That a society be formed, to be called the Christian Instruction Society, for such purposes as household visitation, distribution of tracts, canvassing for scholars for the Sunday-school, cottage prayer meetings, and Sabbath evening services." The new minister meant business. He not only worked earnestly himself, he set his people to work in earnest. The most gratifying progress was the immediate result. Referring to the work of the new committee, the minute book records that "as the result of its energetic labours, the building in which the Church worshipped was speedily overcrowded, even before the close of 1860." On one of the last Sundays in December Mr. Clemance very strongly urged the necessity of a new chapel, and "caused some discomfort and consternation

by intimating that the Church was twenty years behindhand in its provision for worship and teaching." In every undertaking of this kind objectors are sure to spring up. Men declared that the very stones of the old building were dear to them. Some parts of the original chapel of 1689 still remained. The building had been altered and added to again and again in the course of its history, and to some of the members it was almost sacrilege to tamper with the green-baize covered pews, the pulpit from which so many godly men had preached, the children's gallery, or bird's cage, which had been the latest addition, and the walls, part of which were built by the men of 1689. But a great movement was impending, and its advance could not be stayed. At a Church meeting on 2nd January, 1861, it was proposed to pay off a debt of 270*l.*, and, in addition, to commence a fund for a new chapel. "This was negatived, to the great chagrin of the Church, and a proposition to pay off the debt only was carried." The Christian Instruction Society had apparently rallied to its work all the more ardent members of the Church, and stood at the centre of the forward movement. In March, 1861, the society asked to be permitted to put up boxes to receive weekly offerings in aid of their operations, the expenses of which were expected to amount to 50*l.* per annum. Opposition was manifested, discussion followed, and an amendment was moved to the effect "that this Church does not think it the time to incur further expenses." It *never* is the time with

some people. The "forwards" suffered a check in March, but renewed the attack in April, when they won their point in a handsome manner. The following resolutions were carried:—(1) "That this meeting has received with much pleasure the account of the success of the prayer-meetings and of the invitation movement." (2) "That the following gentlemen be requested to act as a committee to arrange for open-air and other religious services during the summer months." . . . (3) "That the thanks of this meeting be given to those friends who have consented to guarantee the expenses of the society until midsummer." (4) "That this meeting is convinced that far more efficient operations might be carried on in connection with the society were the school and chapel accommodation adequate to its immediate requirements. It expresses its earnest hope that some scheme for the enlargement of the school and chapel premises will as soon as possible be set on foot, and pledges itself to give thereto its hearty sympathy and support." The system of weekly offerings was adopted on 18th May, 1861, and the following interesting suggestion was made by the committee:—
 "What is required is that *all* give *something every* Sunday, and the thing would be accomplished. If

	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>		<i>£</i>	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
10 persons would give	2	6	=	1	5	0
20 " " "	1	0	=	1	0	0
50 " " "	0	6	=	1	5	0
100 " " "	0	3	=	1	5	0
100 " " "	0	2	=	0	16	8
300 " " "	0	1	=	1	5	0
<hr/>				<hr/>		
580 persons would give each Sunday				£6 16 8"		

The following year was a memorable anniversary in the history of the Free Churches, and Castle Gate Church resolved to take the tide at its flood. On 25th November, 1861, at a special meeting of the Church, the following resolution, moved by the pastor, and seconded by Mr. Arthur Wells, was carried:—"That the approaching year, 1862, being one of special interest and importance in connection with Protestant Nonconformity, and whereas it is intended by the denomination at large to commemorate in some appropriate way the ejection of the two thousand from the Church of England in 1662 for conscience' sake, we regard it as incumbent on the Church and congregation at Castle Gate to raise some worthy memorial of that great event, and thus to act in concert with other Churches of our order, bearing in mind our position in the denomination, our present needs, and the great and pressing wants of the town." A large committee was appointed and asked to bring forward a definite scheme. It recommended a new chapel. The report was received on 23rd December, 1861, and only four hands went up against the proposal. Another feeble attempt at opposition was made in September, 1862, but nothing could stop the triumphant progress of the movement.

Plans for a new chapel were prepared by Mr. R. C. Sutton, architect, Bromley House, and accepted. The following description of the chapel is taken from a local paper of the time:—"The building will be in the Venetian style, treated, however,

in a free manner; several parts thereof bearing evidence of the predilection of the architect for the Gothic style—the details throughout, as we judge from the drawings, being treated with great boldness, the effect of which is original and effective. The main features of the building will be of brick, with stone dressings. The architect has placed the windows, both in the side and front elevations, in deep recesses, relying evidently on this and on deep under-cut mouldings for a breadth of shadow and a play of light and shade on the building, the absence of which destroys the effect of so many of our modern public edifices. This is a point to which the ancient architects gave first attention, but which, strange to say, our modern architects, in many instances, fail to appreciate. The chapel will front Castle Gate, and the façade will consist of a centre, with two wings projecting, with ornamental cornices round, containing the gallery staircases. The height of the front to the apex of the gable will be upwards of sixty feet, the extreme width of the front, sixty-six feet, and the length, one hundred and three feet. The main entrances will consist of two doorways, divided by a granite shaft, with carved capitals in the centre, contained under a fan-traceried archway, eleven feet span, having pilasters with early French carved capitals on each side; above which runs a deep stone cornice with stone bosses deeply relieved. Above this is a large circular-headed two-light window, with granite shaft, and enriched with carving, with a circular-traceried head. The window is flanked on either

side by a single-light window; over this is a highly-ornamented stone-bracketed pediment, surmounted by an iron finial, the height to the extreme point of which will be about seventy-five feet. On the side elevation there are five bays, each containing two tiers of semi-circular-headed traceried windows, the lower ones having the spandrels filled with carving. There is also a doorway on each side of the elevation of an elaborate character, having granite shafts, carved caps, and a very novel treatment of the ornaments in the arch itself, with a key-stone running into the stone string-course which runs round the building. The interior of the arrangements are, as far as we can judge of the plans, fully as well considered as the external appearance. . . . From Castle Gate we enter, through the principal doors, a spacious vestibule, twelve feet square, and thence, through folding doors, into lobbies, twelve feet by six feet six inches, immediately into the centre aisles, which run from end to end of the chapel. Through the side entrances lobbies communicate with the side aisles; and also through these doors the principal gallery staircases are approached. . . . The seats on the ground floor are placed in five blocks—one in the front of the pulpit, one on each side of these, and on each side of the pulpit. Spacious stone staircases, five feet in width, without “winders,” communicate with the galleries, which continue along three sides of the chapel, besides a large organ gallery at the extreme north end of the chapel. The pulpit is large, and enclosed within a spacious communion space, raised

eighteen inches above the floor of the chapel. A novel feature in the interior will consist in an arcade running the entire length of the chapel, supported upon coupled iron shafts. The interior will form a *tout ensemble* of a most imposing character, the object of the architect being evidently, both in the general design and in the carrying out of the details, to secure originality of appearance, though at the same time eminently adapted, in all matters of comfort and convenience, both as to seeing and hearing, for a place of worship."

On Thursday, 11th June, 1863, the foundation stone was laid by Mr. Alexander Alliot. In an introductory address, the Rev. Clement Clemance said :—"It would be ungrateful to God, and it would be injurious to themselves, were they to forget the sacredness of the spot on which they stood. The Church and congregation had certainly a noble history. The history of Churches was something like the history of a tree. A tree shed its leaves year after year, and yet lived: so it was with the Church. It lost its members year after year by death or removal, but yet the Church lived on age after age." After referring to the outstanding features of the history of the Church, he said they felt "it was right to acknowledge the work of our forefathers, and if the circumstances of the town and the congregation justified it, to assert in a larger, stronger manner that strength which God had permitted them to acquire, and it seemed to them that the circumstances of the Church and congregation did justify it. The building in which they used to worship was not

sufficiently commodious for the growth of the Church and the growth of the town, and as Nonconformists it seemed right that they should take their part in doing something to extend the provision for Church worship. Some Christian friends whom he highly valued differed from them in opinion, and that difference of opinion led them to consider and reconsider this great work: and the more they considered it, the more deeply they felt that this was the work for them to perform." Mr. Alexander Alliott struck the note of praise. "In laying the foundation stone of the enlargement of this house of God, where we and our fathers worshipped, where the blessing of God has so long dwelt, where His gracious presence and loving kindness have been so constantly experienced, we must each feel called upon to bless and praise the Lord our God, and magnify His glorious name. . . . We are also called upon to do honour to the memory of the faith and works of those pious, good men, who here laid the foundation stone of the building which we to-day enlarge. The company there associated, although small in number, were strong in faith. They were but just relieved from the cruel persecutions they had for so long a time been subject to, and now, for the first time for many years, found themselves, through the ever-memorable Revolution of 1688, free to build a house where they might meet and worship their God and Father according to the dictates of their own consciences, none daring to make them afraid. . . . They suffered and laboured, and we, in the enjoy-

ment of the liberty they obtained, have entered into their labours. He could not and would not forget what we owe, under God, to these true and noble-hearted men. . . . We may be quite sure how much our forefathers would have rejoiced had they been permitted to look forward and see the things we see. Those thoughts almost of necessity press themselves upon us whilst we stand within the broken-down, but still uprising walls of the building wherein, for so many years, we have met together for prayer and praise. . . . The question of the desirability of enlarging the place of worship has now been before the Church for the last twenty years. The importance of doing this has gradually enforced itself on the minds of the whole Church, until the question latterly became one more of necessity than mere desirability, except the Church would consent to sink in its power of usefulness. This great work has not been forced forward. Seventeen years ago, surveys and plans with this object in view were, at a considerable expense, obtained, and now we are all very much indebted to our beloved Pastor for the wisdom with which he directed, and the energy with which he seconded our efforts. . . . The great honour and privilege of being permitted to take part in the work of building a house wherein the name of the Lord God of Israel may be recorded, and in which we may bow down and worship the Lord our Maker, is now granted to us, and who amongst us is not thankful for God's goodness to us?" The double feeling of regret and thankfulness in the minds of the people was expressed

by the Rev. W. Alliot, Bedford, after his brother had laid the stone. "I know," he said, "how deep-rooted was your attachment to your old sanctuary, and how great was your reluctance to part with it; with this feeling I most cordially sympathise, for all the associations of my early life are connected with it; all that is pleasing and sacred in the memory of the past connects itself with the place where we were wont to worship. At the same time, I rejoice that you have been willing to sacrifice these private feelings as soon as they appeared to clash with the honour of God, and the enlargement of the Redeemer's Kingdom."

During the progress of the new building, the services were held in the Mechanics' Hall. In one respect this was a gain. Mr. Clemance was able to reach a larger audience, and many came to the hall who would not at first have gone to church. The Communion Services were held at Friar Lane Chapel, which was kindly lent for that purpose.

On Tuesday, 2nd August, 1864, the new chapel was opened with great rejoicing. Dr. Alexander Raleigh, of Canonbury, London, preached in the morning from 2 Cor. v. 1.; and Dr. Enoch Mellor, of Liverpool, in the evening from Acts iii. 16. On Sunday, 7th August, two sermons were preached by the Rev. Robert Halley, D.D., of London; and on the following Sunday the Rev. George Smith, D.D., of Poplar, London, conducted the services.

The entire cost of the new chapel, including the organ, and the amount expended on out buildings, was 7,361*l.* 15*s.*

In April, 1862, Mr. Thomas Taylor was engaged as missionary to Castle Gate Church. For many years he carried on his work in the poorer part of the city surrounding the church.

In 1870 the Rev. Robert Nobbs, of Dudley, was invited to become assistant to Mr. Clemance, and continued to occupy this position till December, 1872, when he became pastor of the Church at Rochester. He received a farewell present of one hundred volumes of books and a purse of sovereigns.

Mr. Clemance's ministry continued to be crowned with success. Large numbers were added to the Church year by year. Mr. Clemance was a most devoted pastor, and a beloved friend in every home. He watched over the young people with zealous care, and conducted special classes for their benefit, in which he dealt with books like Butler's "Analogy." In 1871 he received a call from the Church at Hornsey, but at the earnest entreaty of the members of Castlegate Church, he decided to remain. On account of a temporary failure of health in 1874 the Church agreed to give him a six months' leave of absence in the earnest hope that by God's blessing he might be perfectly restored. On 6th April, 1875, to the deep regret of the congregation, Mr. Clemance tendered his resignation on his acceptance of a call to Camberwell Church, London. How great was the difficulty of parting from his people may be gathered from the letter in which he finally communicated his decision. "It was intended to send in the letter of resignation on Monday evening last, but your earnest

resolution, the visit of the deputation who put it into my hands, the letters I have since received, the wish of many to unite together in prayer for God's guidance and light, and also the very anxious memorial signed by hundreds of friends in a very short space of time have made me very seriously reconsider the whole question. At first I wavered, and if my own inclinations had been allowed to prevail I should at once have withdrawn from the position intimated in last week's notice. The result, however, of the reconsideration of the question is that I feel more and more convinced that the providence of God is calling me away. I do not leave you, my dear friends, owing to any feeling of dissatisfaction of any kind whatever; 'tis not because I love the Church less, nor because you have left aught undone that might have been done to minister to my comfort; but simply that through the somewhat intense pressure of nearly fifteen years my physical strength has become so far lessened that I do not feel able to meet all the new and increasing demands which await the Church in the future." The esteem in which he was held by the Church is well expressed in the address presented to him at a farewell meeting in the Mechanics' Hall. "For nearly fifteen years you have been enabled, though sometimes suffering from much weakness, to fulfil the duties, bear the responsibilities, and grapple with the difficulties which the pastor of a large Church must ever find in building up his own people. You have instructed the young, reclaimed the erring,

comforted the weak and suffering, and stimulated the strong to holy effort. We recall with thankfulness that, during your stay with us, and mainly through your instrumentality, our own place of worship has been rebuilt, our Church increased, three new Churches formed from among us, and our mission stations have been multiplied and strengthened." The Rev. G. Matheson, of Friar Lane Chapel, expressed the sincere regret of the ministers and officers of the Congregational Churches at Mr. Clemance's departure from Nottingham, their profound respect for the consistency of his Christian character, and their appreciation of the lively interest he had always taken in the welfare of the surrounding Churches. In a beautiful reply to the various addresses which were presented, Mr. Clemance referred to the unbroken harmony of the last fifteen years, and declared that there was nothing firmer, truer, deeper, than Nottingham Christian sympathy. His closing words, spoken with deep emotion, were:—"May God be with you and bless you and keep you; may the little ones whom it has been my joy to feed with the bread of life, very early find Jesus' name the sweetest music in their ears, and Jesus' love the joy of their hearts; may the young men and young women put on the ornaments of virtue, faith and love; may the men of business hold fast their integrity; and may those of advanced years be ever bringing forth fruit richer and riper that shall be to the glory of God and the blessing of the Church."

CHAPTER XVIII

A MOTHER OF CHURCHES

THE Church at Castle Gate has been a mother of Churches. Her daughters are scattered all over the city. Nottingham Congregationalism is largely the result of the growth and expansion of Castle Gate Church. In this chapter it is proposed to recall her various successful efforts at Church extension.

Parkhill Church.

From the minute book of this Church, we learn that it "originated in the efforts of a few individuals, all of whom were connected with the congregation, and several with the church, assembling in Castle Gate. They had been for some time impressed with the conviction that the town presented a larger sphere for Christian exertion than had been hitherto occupied; that a new interest, founded on the principles which they themselves professed, might be formed, and under the Divine blessing might be productive of extensive good; and that an effort for this purpose was peculiarly desirable and reasonable, as every sitting in their own place of worship was already disposed of, and fresh applicants who from time to time wished for admission were unable to obtain it.

They deliberated long and anxiously on the propriety of making such an effort, and on the best mode of conducting it, and after encountering many trying difficulties, came at length to the determination to take upon themselves the risk of erecting a new chapel and providing it with a minister. In pursuance of this resolution, some premises situated in St. James's Street were purchased, a room was prepared in which the first experiment might be tried, and on Lord's Day, 12th January, 1823, it was opened for Divine worship."¹ On that day the pulpit was occupied by the Rev. Richard Cecil, of Harpenden. Mr. Cecil was invited to accept the pastorate, and began his ministry on the first Sunday of July. On 15th May, 1823, the foundation stone of a new chapel was laid in St. James's Street. The chapel was opened on 23rd September, when the services were conducted by the Rev. R. S. McAll, of Macclesfield, and the Rev. Mr. Blackburn, of Claremont Chapel, London. The Church was not formed till 18th March, 1824, and then only four members were found willing to take this important step. Mr. Cecil was ordained on 15th April of the same year. At the ordination service, the Rev. James Bennett, of Rotherham, offered prayer, and the Rev. Joseph Gilbert, of Hull, addressed the new minister in "an affectionate and faithful charge." Mr. Gilbert was afterwards invited to become co-pastor, and commenced his ministry in Nottingham on 20th November, 1825. In May, 1827, Mr. Gilbert withdrew, along with thirteen

¹ Parkhill Church Minute Book.

members of the Church, and formed a new Church in Friar Lane, where he ministered with great distinction for many years. In 1880 the St. James's Street Chapel was abandoned, and the congregation, with the approval of all the sister Churches of the town, moved to its present handsome buildings in Derby Road. The closing services in St. James's Chapel were held on 11th July, 1880, and were conducted by the Rev. J. M. Wright, of Leicester.

At the celebration of the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of Castle Gate Church, it was pleasant to receive the good wishes of her eldest daughter in a resolution signed by the pastor, the Rev. Clifton Somervell, from which the following sentences are quoted:—"We rejoice with you in all the blessings that Almighty God has bestowed upon your Church since its foundation. We give thanks for the men of God who have served the Church as pastors and officers, and for all those who through its instrumentality have entered into the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. As the oldest offshoot from Castle Gate—the mother Church—we acknowledge how very ready and willing you have ever been to plant and foster the growth of daughter Churches throughout the city. We pray that you may be strong to carry forward the great work which God has given you to do."

Boulevard Church.

In 1822 a Sunday school was opened in the new village of Hyson Green, Mr. Avison, the great grandfather of the present superintendent of Castle Gate

Sunday School, offering a room for its accommodation. At the same time Mr. Burton, a member of Castle Gate Church, undertook regular Sabbath evening preaching. In 1824 the room, which had been gratuitously lent, was needed by its owner, and it was resolved to build a small place of worship. The little chapel was opened on 8th August, 1824, when Mr. Alliott preached in the afternoon and evening, and collections were made towards defraying the expense of its erection. The cost of the building was 577*l.* 15*s.* 2*d.* Thereafter Mr. Burton conducted two services each Sunday, and both the school and the congregation continued to flourish. At a special meeting of Castle Gate Church in August, 1831, the members residing at Hyson Green expressed their desire to be formed into a separate Church, and to give Mr. Burton a call to be their pastor. The following sentences are quoted from this interesting document :—" We whose names are annexed to this memorial are members with you (and, we trust, with you, members of Christ's mystical body), although usually worshipping at the same time, in a different place. After special meetings for prayer to God, that He would direct us, we have come to the conclusion of respectfully addressing you on the subject of separation and forming a Church at Hyson Green. Permit us to request an interest in your prayers with regard to this important subject, then your candid opinion and pious counsel. We have no cause to be dissatisfied with our beloved pastors ; to their labours of love we are much indebted, and we desire to

express our grateful acknowledgments for their valuable services, and also for the very long, liberal, and cheerful assistance which we have received from the Church and congregation at Castle Gate; and our hope is that the occasional and affectionate visits of the one, and the kind assistance of the other (if needful) be long continued. . . . Should you after mature deliberation recommend the formation of a separate Church, our prayer is that the affection which has hitherto subsisted between us may not only continue, but greatly abound.”¹ The memorial is signed by thirty-seven members. It was received with perfect sympathy, and it was resolved “that it is the opinion of the brethren that the members at Hyson Green should be formed into a separate Church; that nevertheless, whilst in all matters of discipline it be perfectly independent, the spirit of affection which has hitherto subsisted be maintained; that there be open communion between the two Churches; and that we continue to render to the cause at Hyson Green all the assistance in our power.”¹ The Church thus humbly started on its independent career now possesses a beautiful building on the Boulevard, and prospers under the ministry of the Rev. F. J. Fry.

Albion Church.

On 14th April, 1842, a branch Sunday school was started at Sneinton, and a one-storey building in Upper Eldon Street was hired for a meeting place.

¹ Castle Gate Church Book.

About two years afterwards another storey was added to the building to meet the growing needs of the mission, and these premises were used until the chapel was opened and the present school erected. It was here where the late Rev. William Crosbie first became a Sunday-school teacher, prior to his going to Rotherham College to prepare for the ministry. The first meeting to consider the question of building a chapel at Sneinton was held in the warehouse of Messrs. I. and R. Morley. Mr. Arthur Morley presided; it was agreed to proceed with the building of a chapel, and a committee was formed to carry on the work. The chapel, which is in the Italian style, was designed by Mr. Thomas Oliver, of Sunderland. The ceremony of laying the foundation stone, which was performed by Mr. Alderman Herbert, was part of the bi-centenary services of Castle Gate Church. After the foundation stone had been laid on 8th October, 1855, an address was delivered by the Rev. Samuel McAll. Albion Chapel was opened for public worship on 14th August, 1856, and was regarded by the members at Castle Gate as a memorial for the favours God had bestowed upon them during the two hundred years of their Church's history. On 14th September, 1856, a district church was constituted by the withdrawal of forty-two members from Castle Gate, and under date 1st October, the following resolution is recorded in our minute book :—"That this Church accepts, with feelings of sincere respect and kindness, the intimation that certain of its members have deemed it their duty to worship at Albion Chapel,

Sneinton, and to constitute a distinct and separate Church in that place; that the Church meeting in Castle Gate does most sincerely and affectionately commend these its brethren to the Lord on whom they have believed, and prays that it may please the Shepherd of Israel to make them and the places round about His hill a blessing."¹ Among those who were foremost in this home missionary enterprise were the late Messrs. Samuel Weston More and John Straw, both of whom laboured for the good of Albion Chapel with unconsumed zeal and unwavering fidelity until they were called to the higher service. The Church has had a chequered career, and numbered only fifty-nine members when, on 7th January, 1894, the present pastor, the Rev. Speight Auty, commenced his labours. From that time there has been no turning back. Mr. Straw, who had been faithful in the dark days, as well as in the bright, lived to see a Church with well over two hundred members, and a Sunday school of nearly four hundred scholars. He touchingly uttered the *Nunc Dimittis* at the opening of a new organ in 1905, and passed to his eternal rest a few days afterwards. Under the leadership of Mr. Auty, Albion Church has won a position of great influence in one of the most needy districts of the city.

Addison Street Church.

The members of Castle Gate had a large share in the origination of Addison Street Church. At a

¹ Castle Gate Church Book.

special Church meeting on 11th February, 1867, they passed the following resolution:—"That this Church has long felt the need of a new Congregational place of worship in that part of the town in which a site for that purpose has been chosen. It rejoices to hear that a temporary iron chapel can be erected at so small a cost, and that the plans and deliberations of Christian friends are so far advanced as to warrant its almost immediate commencement. It deeply regrets that, owing to the liabilities which as yet press upon it, it is unable, as a Church, to contribute so largely towards its erection as it would otherwise have done. At the same time, it would express its very deep sympathy with the undertaking, and its earnest prayers for its success, and would commend the entire movement to the help of all who feel the need of Free Church extension in our large and growing towns."¹ This resolution was backed by help of the most valuable kind, for on 2nd October of the same year, sixteen members, including the Rev. F. S. Williams and Mrs. Williams, were sent from Castle Gate to help the new cause. The letter of commendation, from which a few sentences are quoted, shows the spirit of the undertaking:—"We most entirely concur and approve of the step you are taking in joining together to form and uphold a new Christian society adopting the faith and order of Independent Churches. We bid you God-speed in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Fully appreciating and reciprocating your attachment to our

¹ Castle Gate Church Book,

fellowship which has led you to express the wish not to be dissevered from us, we still gladly retain you in membership with us, yet leave you at full liberty to act with the rest of the newly-formed brotherhood to which we thus introduce you. May you have very much of the presence of our Lord Jesus, and of the fellowship of the Comforter, in every step which you and your associated brethren may take. Either in constituting among yourselves a fellowship entirely distinct from our own, or one that shall be affiliated with this Church, may you be guided by the spirit of wisdom and understanding. Should the new community adopt the latter course, you will, in that case, remain on our books as before, or, if the former course be adopted, it will only be needful that such of you as adhere to the distinct Church so formed, should send us your resignation accordingly. In either case our prayer with equal fervour shall be, 'Peace be on you and mercy, and on the Israel of God.'"¹ On Tuesday, 15th October, a solemn service was held at Addison Street Chapel under the presidency of the Rev. John Wild, at which a Christian fellowship was formed; and, as the first act of the newly-formed fellowship, it was resolved unanimously, "That it would be for the promotion of Christian union and affection that overtures should at once be made to the Church at Castle Gate that the new Church should be a branch of the parent Church; the terms of such a union to be hereafter mutually adjusted." The proposal was somewhat of a novelty at the time.

¹ Castle Gate Church Book.

Mr. Clemance, after mature deliberation, strongly advocated the union for the following reasons :—

“(1) The plan of union is decidedly Scriptural; (2) To unite would be to increase our strength; (3) The members of the Church—at least the greater part—those who have gone from us *are* one with us; (4) They desire still to let the fellowship be unbroken, and the desire for union is such a sacred and holy thing that it deserves to be treated with the greatest possible respect and affection.” Mr. Clemance’s far-seeing and statesmanlike view of the question, which was new in those days, appears in his final appeal. “I would very strongly urge the union, and that it should be one most hearty and cordial, not only because I believe that there is no pecuniary consideration to conflict with it, but because I believe that a decided accession of spiritual force and power would be the consequence; we should be growing in numbers and in strength; we should have more stimulus to help in union than in severance; and if, by careful management, our union is auspicious and blessed, it may lead to a further development of the same means of might in this town, and in other large towns of our land. The feeling is gaining strength very considerably, that our Churches lose power by standing alone. Let us help to bring about a more excellent way.” Committees were appointed from each Church to carry on negotiations. The union did not come about in the form advocated by Mr. Clemance, but a working arrangement of great practical value was carried out.

When Addison Street Church called its first minister, the Rev. C. Slater, the Church at Castle Gate passed this resolution :—"That this Church rejoices that the Church at Addison Street has secured as its first pastor one who is already so well known and esteemed among us, the Rev. C. Slater, M.A. ; that it desires, practically, to express its sympathy, and its warmest wishes for the future prosperity of that Church by rendering some pecuniary aid for the first three years of their settlement ; and that with this view it authorises the deacons to appropriate from the weekly offering 50*l.* per annum for the ensuing three years, if necessary, to secure to Mr. Slater an income of not less than 200*l.* per annum, the remainder to be paid by the Church at Addison Street."¹ One more resolution will suffice to illustrate the close tie that bound the two Churches together. At a Church meeting at Castle Gate on 14th July, 1869, it was moved by Mr. Arthur Wells, seconded by Mr. Royce, and carried unanimously, "That it is desirable there should be an exchange of pulpits twice in the month between the pastors of Castle Gate and Addison Street Churches, the exchange to be in the evening, and to be continued after the three months, if found to be pleasant to both Churches."¹ The iron building in which Addison Street Church began has long been displaced by a beautiful Gothic chapel, the fairest Congregational building in the city. Instead of requiring help for itself, it has for many years maintained a mission of its own,

¹ Castle Gate Church Book.

and it is hoped that under the aggressive ministry of the Rev. Alexander Mann, that mission may, in the course of time, become a self-supporting Church.

Queen's Walk Church.

In the fruitful pastorate of Mr. Clemance, another scheme of Church extension was inaugurated. A small mission had been started in an old warehouse in the Meadows district, and on 1st December, 1869, it was recognised by Castle Gate Church as one of its out-stations. The mission was able to pay its own current expenses, and required no financial help at that time. It was, however, wretchedly housed, and a movement for a better place of meeting was inevitable. On one occasion Dr. Paton visited the mission in company with Mr. Clemance. The flooring of the warehouse was so rotten that it refused to support such a weight of theology. Dr. Paton fell through the floor, and Mr. Clemance, who was behind, had the privilege of drawing him back and setting him on a firmer plank. In spite of these disadvantages, the mission flourished. The Castle Gate Sunday school report of 1873, contains the following sentences:—"This (Queen's Walk), the youngest of the Castle Gate family, has grown so fast and so strong that it is going to set up a new house for itself." "Castle Gate School has sent to Kirke White Street a chief officer in whom we are proudly confident, and with Mr. William Lee as superintendent we need have no fear of the tone of the School." Castle Gate gave its best to this undertaking. Mr.

Lee was one of the young men of greatest promise in the Church, but Mr. Clemance made him feel that there was a great opportunity in the Meadows, and that the little mission was the call of God to him. For more than thirty years Mr. Lee has devoted himself to the work, and is now one of the honoured leaders, not only of Queen's Walk Church, but of the denomination in Nottingham and the county. In addition to Mr. and Mrs. Lee, five other members were detached from Castle Gate on 25th February, 1874, and affectionately commended to the fellowship of the new Church. Those who thus sacrifice the comforts and privileges of a well-established and comparatively wealthy Church, and go out to do pioneer work in new districts, are worthy of all honour. Their reward is in the blessing they bring to their fellow men, and in the gracious recognition of their Lord. The Rev. Charles Musk, who became pastor of Queen's Walk Church in 1904, has already had the joy of seeing a spiritual quickening which promises a rich harvest in days to come.

Blooms Grove Church.

The Churches already referred to have long ago become independent of Castle Gate, but three daughters still look for her fostering care. The oldest of these is the Blooms Grove branch, which appears to have been formed in 1836. In 1882 a step was taken which proved to be of the highest value to the cause. Mr. E. A. Simms, who had been a member of Castle Gate since 1862, became superintendent of the mission.

He began his ministry with only twenty members, but the blessing of God rested on his labours, and for twenty-one years he witnessed steady progress. In 1889, Mr. Simms was ordained as assistant pastor for Bloomsgrove, and in 1894 he removed with his congregation from William Street schoolroom to the splendidly adapted building in Norton Street. The new hall was opened on 25th October, 1894, by the Rev. G. S. Barrett, D.D., of Norwich, who was that year chairman of the Congregational Union of England and Wales. On the following Sunday, the services were conducted in the morning by the Rev. E. A. Simms, and in the afternoon and evening by the Rev. R. Baldwin Brindley. The old hall was bought by Mr. William Goddard, and generously presented to Castle Gate Church to be used as a social club for the men of the district. When the congregation entered the new hall, the membership stood at eighty-six; when Mr. Simms resigned the pastorate on 5th April, 1903, it had risen to nearly two hundred. No better testimony to the power of Mr. Simms' ministry can be given than the fact that the Church was now fit to be trusted with a large measure of self-management. Mr. E. A. Barber, also a son of Castle Gate Church, became student pastor in July, 1904, and after finishing his studies at the Congregational College was ordained to the pastorate on 6th July, 1905. At the close of 1904, Castle Gate transferred from its roll one-hundred and eighty-seven members who, having been gathered into fellowship by Mr. Simms, were now formed into a separate Church. Castle Gate,

however, still continues to aid the young Church financially, to supply willing workers for its Sunday school and other organisations, and to guide its councils by the election of four honorary deacons. The Church, under the Rev. A. E. Barber's care, has a bright prospect of growing usefulness and power.

Thorneywood Mission.

This mission, lying on the outskirts of the eastern side of the city, was founded in 1861. The site was chosen in the expectation that the city would soon extend rapidly in that direction and provide a large population as a field of operations. This hope has not been realised. The mission hall is backed by green fields, while in front, across the railway, is the long stretch of Holly Gardens leading up to Blue Bell Hill. Although the population is very limited, the mission does good work in providing for the religious needs of the district, and is carried on in an efficient manner by the students of the Congregational College. The Sunday school, under the leadership of Mr. J. R. Warburton, is in a flourishing condition, and the Sunday service is well attended and highly appreciated. A most successful girls' and young women's club, which brings into the lives of the young people healthy recreative and educational influences, was inaugurated in 1904. The late Mr. John Wright, as the elder of the mission, took a deep interest in its welfare to the time of his death in 1905. As the facilities for communication are extended in its direction, the mission at Thorneywood

may have an opportunity of using the fine young life it has gathered into its fellowship for aggressive work in a larger population.

Old Radford Mission.

For many years the Nottingham Town Mission supplied the Old Radford district and the Union workhouse with Christian instruction by house-to-house visitation. In 1860 the Town Mission felt it necessary to curtail its operations, and ceased to supply Old Radford with a missionary agent. The district consisted of a large working-class population, and a number of Christian friends were constrained to take up the work and secure the continuation of missionary labour in the locality. For this purpose the Radford Town Mission was organised in 1860. Its object was the glory of God in the salvation of men, and it felt specially the claim of the poor in this populous district. Among the names of those who formed the first committee are those of Mr. Alliott, Mr. Sutton, Mr. Haskard, and others that were familiar at Castle Gate. In presenting their first report, on 7th May, 1861, the committee express their gratitude "that at a time when, to all appearance, this important and interesting sphere of labour was likely to be discontinued in consequence of its being separated from the Nottingham Town Mission," friends came to their assistance, enabled them to retain the agent who formerly laboured in the district, and supplied the necessary funds. The report goes on to say, "the labours of the agent consist

in family visitation from house to house, holding meetings and Bible-classes, visiting the sick, and superintending the Factory Sunday school." During the year the agent made 2,567 visits, and held 254 meetings and Bible-classes. A second missionary was appointed in 1863. On the 11th February, 1867, the mission was taken over by Castle Gate Church, with which it is still identified. The best feature of the work is the Sunday school, under the superintendency of Mr. F. Howard Williams. Recognising the great need of the district, Castle Gate Church has recently appointed one of its members, Mr. J. J. Smith, as missionary superintendent, and it is hoped that steady progress may now be made.

The mission stations are a great boon to the mother Church, in affording opportunity for her young men and women to use their talents in the service of God. The parent Church receives as much as she gives. No part of her work is better worth doing than that in which she seeks to bring the gladness of the gospel into the homes of the people. In carrying on this enterprise, the Church is greatly indebted to the voluntary help of the students of the Congregational Institute, who give themselves with hearty earnestness to the work of visiting the people and of preaching the gospel from week to week.

In addition to being a mother of churches, Castle Gate has, during the last hundred years, sent many of her sons into the ministry. It has been impossible

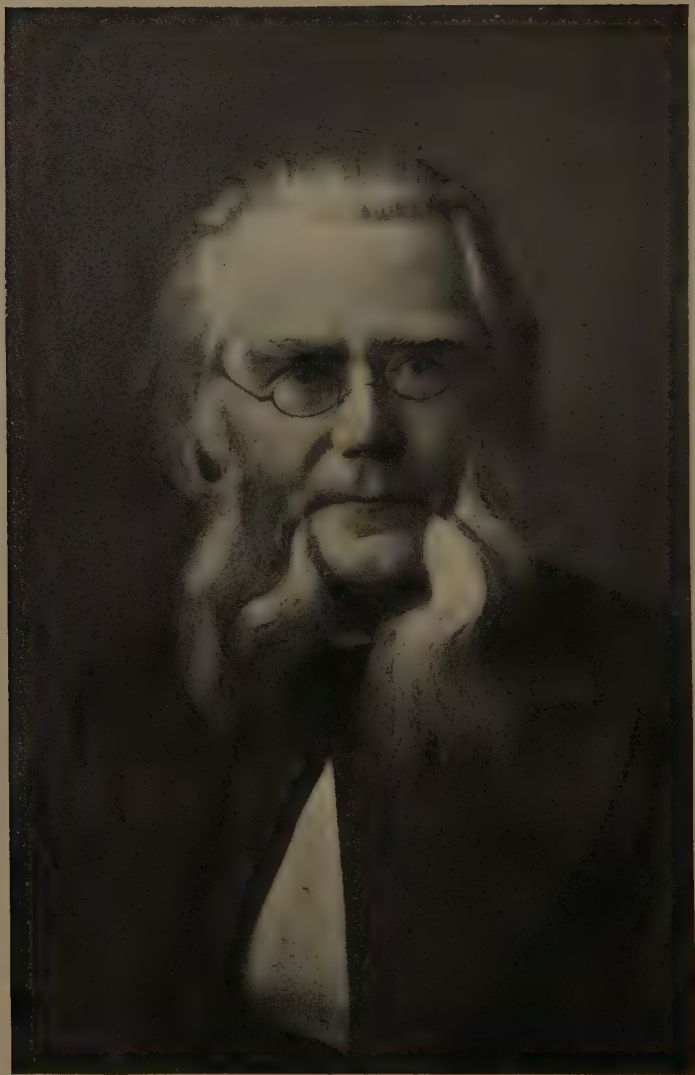
to obtain a complete list, but the following names form part of her

ROLL OF HONOUR.

Name.	College.	Ministry commenced	Settlements.
RICHARD ALLIOTT, JR. LL.D.	Homerton	1828	Castle Gate; York Road, London; Principal of Western, Cheshunt and Spring Hill Colleges successively.
THOMAS B. BURTON	.....	1831	Nottingham (Hyson Green, now Boulevard).
WILLIAM ALLIOTT	Wymondley	1832	Bedford.
THOMAS CLARKE, M.A.	Highbury	1842	Head-master of Taunton School.
JOHN P. PALMER	Rotherham	1848	Wolverhampton.
W. ROBINSON SMART	Rotherham	..	Unable, through serious illness, to enter the ministry.
WILLIAM CROSBIE, M.A., LL.B.	Rotherham	1856	Romsey, Derby, Brighton, Nottingham (Park Hill).
JOHN MACARTNEY	Rotherham	1857	Bellary, S. India.
SAMUEL WILKINSON	Rotherham	1858	London; Taunton.
JOHN BONSER, B.A.	Rotherham	1859	Newcastle-on-Tyne; Truro; Ilkeston; Rawmarsh; Nottingham Institute (Honorary).
SAMUEL W. MCALL, M.A.	Cheshunt	1860	Macclesfield, London.
ROBERT MCALL	Rotherham	1861	Hanley; Leeds.
ALFRED D. PHILPS	Hackney	1864	Coggeshall; Bristol.
GILBERT MCALL	Cheshunt	1865	Bermondsey.
WILLIAM M. BEEBY	Spring Hill	1866	St. Austell; Newcastle-under-Lyne.
JAMES GRANT	Nottingham	1867	Donaghmore; Innerleithen; Glasgow.
GEORGE HENRY HANCOCK	Nottingham	1868	Brigg; Langtoft; Eastdene; Hambleton; Tatterhall.

ROLL OF HONOUR—*continued.*

Name.	College.	Ministry com- menced	Settlements.
GEORGE WILLIAM SHARPE	Lancashire	1876	Hobart Town, Tas- mania.
ARTHUR JAMES, B.A.	Nottingham, Galway, and Regent's Park	1877	President of Calabar Baptist College, Jamaica.
C. H. HICKLING	Hackney	1880	Hoddesdon; East- bourne; Manches- ter; Hong Kong, China.
A. H. CULLEN	Spring Hill and Edinburgh	1887	Gloucester; Heaton Mersey.
ELIJAH A. SIMMS	.....	1889	Nottingham (Blooms- grove).
A. D. LEWIS	Nottingham	1900	Baptist Church, Helensburgh.
JAMES H. CULLEN	Cheshunt	1891	South Seas; New Guinea; Barkly, South Africa.
MARTHA E. HASKARD	.....	1892	Bellary, South India.
WILLIAM B. TIRBUTT	Owens, Manchester	1896	Milnrow, Lancashire.
ANNIE R. LLOYD	.....	1897	Calcutta, India.
ALBERT E. BARBER	Nottingham	1905	Nottingham (Blooms- grove).
WILLIAM W. GAYTON	Nottingham	...	Entered College, 1903.
WILLIAM FEAKIN	Nottingham	...	Entered College, 1904.



REV. JOHN BARTLETT.

CHAPTER XIX

RECENT MINISTRIES

ON 28th July, 1875, it was decided to invite the Rev. John Bartlett, of Halifax, to become pastor of the Church in succession to Mr. Clemance. The members were moved to this decision by the high character he had maintained as a minister whilst labouring in other Churches, and also by the great satisfaction with which they had listened to his preaching. The invitation was most cordial. In the letter which accompanied the "call," the deacons declared that it is "rare to find so singular a unanimity as pervaded our meetings." In his acceptance of the invitation, Mr. Bartlett said: "The prompt action of the Church, the unanimous vote, and the cordial feeling which the deacons assure me pervaded your meeting, have greatly helped me to this decision. Had there been difference of opinion or undue hesitation on the part of the Church, reducing the question of future usefulness to a balance of probabilities, I should have felt that the way was not made plain before me. . . . Of my work among you I can say nothing now. I have no promises, no declarations to make, except that I shall come in the name of my Divine Master to do His work, the

work for which, and in which, I live." For eight years Mr. Bartlett sustained a brilliant ministry. He lived for the pulpit, and made his sermons so memorable that to-day they live in the memory of those who were privileged to hear them. His discourses on historical subjects from the Old and New Testaments seem to have made a profound impression, and his earnest and solemn application of truth to the mind and conscience of his hearers brought them face to face with eternal realities. He bravely fought against physical weakness without saying a word to his people, and his resignation in August, 1883, came upon them as a surprise. His letter is full of the pathos of baffled hope and endeavour. "When, eight years ago, I accepted your invitation to become pastor of Castle Gate Church, I did so in the full expectation that it would be my last sphere of labour, and that I should close my ministerial life, and in all probability end my days in Nottingham. Some two and a half years ago, however, when I was very unwell, suffering from constant weakness and weariness, the expectation was sorely shaken. For I was then told by eminent medical men, both here and in London, that in consequence of a constitutional weakness—a result of overwork—it was absolutely necessary that I should lessen my labour, even though I should have to abandon my position. As may be supposed, this very decided and concurrent advice caused me some anxiety, the more so because of the peculiar circumstances of the Church at the time. Several things were in progress needing

superintendence, and the new school scheme was just taking definite form, after many and long delays. I could not but feel that my resignation at such a time might prove a serious hindrance to this work, as it would be necessarily followed by a period of unsettlement and uncertainty. I therefore said nothing of my condition, or of the advice given me, but went on doing my best to meet the demands made upon me. I do not hesitate to say that this has been done at a somewhat serious cost to myself, and in some respects, no doubt, the Church has suffered through my inefficiency. Now, however, there seems to be no reason why I should longer delay the step which must be taken; and which, had I consulted my own interest only, I should have taken two years ago. The new schools are finished; the diaconate has been strengthened, and there is nothing on hand, or in prospect, that makes the time inopportune. . . . I have therefore, after most anxious consideration, concluded that I have now no choice, but to give back to you the charge you unanimously committed to me eight years ago. For the time that may remain to me, I must be content to serve in a less prominent position, and in a very much smaller sphere. You will quite understand that it is not without regret and pain I withdraw from a position of so much influence and possible usefulness. But I bow to the will that called me to this service, and to the love and mercy which have sustained me in the prominence I have for many years held. And I accept now the more

quiet and smaller work to which the Master so plainly points, as that which He sees to be best for me, and for His truth." The brave struggler, borne down at last by the pressure which a large Church puts upon its minister, was never nobler than in the silent bearing of pain when his presence at Castle Gate was needed for the carrying through of the great building scheme, and in the quiet relinquishing of his work when another could step into his place. The Church, in its desire to keep her "loved and respected pastor," sought means to lighten his labours in order that he might continue his work. It was too late. No plan could be devised that would sufficiently lighten the burden. The Church was obliged, "with much sorrow," to accept the resignation, and Mr. Bartlett, too ill to face the ordeal of a farewell service, brought his brilliant ministry to an abrupt and unsuspected close in September, 1883.

On 25th June, 1884, the Rev. R. Baldwin Brindley, of Ramsgate, received a unanimous invitation to the pastorate. Mr. Brindley was a "son of the manse." Of his father, the Rev. Richard Brindley, of Percy Chapel, Battle, and afterwards of Markham Square Church, London, a writer says: "Few pastors in his day were more deservedly beloved than was Richard Brindley, for his truly spiritual ministrations which, extending far beyond his own Church circle, won the hearts of all who were privileged to profit by them. He was a man of strong personal influence, which poured out from his whole life like heat from a flame." Mr. Baldwin Brindley came to his work



REV. R. BALDWIN BRINDLEY.

at Castle Gate at an early age, but with a wide experience. His business training fitted him to deal with men; his collegiate course at King's College and at New College, furnished him with intellectual equipment; and his three years' work at Ramsgate, —where young men flocked to hear him, and where his name became as familiar as a household word among the fishermen—made him an efficient pastor. One who knew him in his Ramsgate days wrote: "It was not only as a minister, but as a man that R. Baldwin Brindley was esteemed a brother beloved. We who laboured in the same county with him, understood the difficulties which he had to face, the prejudices which it was necessary for him to overcome. He met and conquered both by the beauty and excellency of a simple, noble life, which was supported by unremitting toil and a tremendous expenditure of genuine sympathy. Undoubtedly his tall, commanding presence, his sonorous voice, his manly, unaffected style of delivery, were valuable adjuncts to his ministry; but what told upon all who heard him was his faithful proclamation of the gospel message." Mr. Brindley was thus fitted "to follow in the steps of predecessors who were memorable for worth and work, to successfully conduct the business of the Nonconformist Cathedral of the county, and to maintain the ministry of the pulpit at a lofty pitch of moral and spiritual excellence."

Soon after coming to Nottingham, Mr. Brindley, moved by the dull grey life of so many in our large cities, inaugurated the "Christmas Charity," which

by a collection usually realising 70*l.* or 80*l.*, has brought Christmas cheer into six hundred homes of the people of all denominations—and of no denomination—every year.

From the beginning of his ministry, Mr. Brindley took the deepest interest in the work of the London Missionary Society. In 1891 his work was recognised by his being invited to accept the office of Home Secretary of the society. Mr. Brindley could not be persuaded to give up his pastoral work. How well he served the society in his own sphere, however, may be judged from the fact that the Church contributes about 500*l.* every year to its funds.

In 1897 Mr. Brindley established a Church magazine which he edited as long as he remained in Nottingham. About this time an unsuccessful attempt was made to secure his services by the Countess of Huntingdon's Church, North Street, Brighton. In 1899, Dr. Guinness Rogers, the veteran Congregationalist, proposed to retire from the ministry, and Mr. Brindley was asked to accept the position of colleague for one year, and successor thereafter. Again he refused to leave Castle Gate. A special meeting of the congregation was held to express the gratitude of the members at his decision: to present a suitable gift as a memento of his fifteen years of service, and to bid him "God-speed" as he set out as a delegate to the International Congregational Council in America. In presenting a silver tea and coffee service and purse of sovereigns,



REV. A. R. HENDERSON, M.A.

Mr. Alliott said "they could not pretend for a moment that anything they might do that night would be an adequate expression of the esteem which they felt both for their pastor and his wife, but they did think that in making to each of them a presentation they would be indicating that Mr. and Mrs. Brindley possessed their confidence and affection, and that it had been a great satisfaction to them that they had decided to stay at Nottingham. Their Church had prospered under Mr. Brindley's ministry, and their agencies for all good work had been strengthened, and they trusted that their pastor would long retain health and strength to continue his work amongst them." This last wish was unfortunately disappointed. In 1900, Mr. Brindley's health was seriously affected, and in March, 1901, he accepted the charge of George Street Church, Croydon. During Mr. Brindley's pastorate of nearly seventeen years a new mission hall was opened for the Blooms Grove branch, and an assistant pastor appointed to carry on the work; the Twentieth Century Fund was carried to a successful issue, the contribution from Castle Gate being over 2,000*l.*, and the Church membership rose steadily from five hundred to eight hundred. His feeling in leaving the Church may be judged by the following sentences:—"I have spent the best years of my life among you, and do not regret the fact that they have been given to you. I leave you a united and prosperous Church. My love for you will never change."

Mr. Brindley was succeeded in May, 1902, by the

present pastor, the Rev. A. R. Henderson, M.A., of Augustine Congregational Church, Edinburgh.

In 1904 a special fund of 1,000*l.* was raised to decorate the school rooms, to provide a new heating apparatus for them, and also to wipe off the remainder of the debt on Blooms Grove branch, and thus enable it to start on its career of independence untrammelled by a financial burden.

In the same year a thorough visitation of the district in which the Church is situated, by the four students of the Congregational College who are attached to Castle Gate, revealed the great need of a ministry of another kind. It was felt that in the houses of the poor and the sick the touch of a woman's hand would do more to relieve the suffering and distress than any other agency which the Church could provide. At a meeting of the Church on 28th September, 1904, it was unanimously agreed to proceed forthwith to try to secure the services of a nurse-deaconess, who should carry the skill of a nurse, and the message of an evangelist, into the homes of the poor and the afflicted. In November, 1904, Miss Grace Bailey was appointed to the position, and, as "Sister Grace," she is known and esteemed throughout the district. In the course of a month she makes as many as three hundred visits, and as she often has to deal with medical and surgical cases these visits cannot be hurried. "Sister Grace" is ready to visit any sick person in the district without regard to Church connection, and it is impossible to estimate the good that is thus accomplished.

Reference has already been made to the Blooms-grove Social Club, which has been carried on with great success since 1894 in the old mission premises. The club-room is fully equipped with billiard tables and games of all kinds, and is practically self-supporting. Another venture of the same kind, though on a smaller scale, was made in 1904, when three of the class rooms of the Sunday school were appropriated for a men's club, and are open every night of the week. The work is hampered by the small accommodation available, but something has undoubtedly been done by this and similar clubs to provide a safe means of recreation for many to whom the public-house is the only alternative.

CHAPTER XX

RETROSPECT AND OUTLOOK

THE history which has been recorded in the preceding pages affords many reasons for profound gratitude to God. No one will claim that the successive generations of men who formed the Church were perfect. They shared the limitations of their time and circumstances. The story is marred by an occasional exhibition of harshness of temper, and narrowness of view. On the whole, however, it is a noble record of courage, fidelity, and high endeavour. No attempt has been made to bind the future by a written creed ; the weight of the " dead hand " has never been felt ; and yet the Church has remained loyal to the evangelical faith. In the time of trial, during the reigns of Charles II. and James II., a mere handful of men and women bore their testimony to the crown-rights of the Redeemer, and remained faithful in spite of persecution, distraint, and imprisonment. The readiness with which the members of the Church have accepted every new opportunity of service is remarkable. No sooner was the Toleration Act passed in 1689 than they began to build a meeting house for the worship of God. The Sunday School movement, at the close of



PRESENT DEACONS.

the eighteenth century, found in them willing pioneers. The London Missionary Society was no sooner formed than it found their minister an earnest advocate. The call for Church extension in the city met with an earnest and practical response. The growth of the Church's own work led from time to time to the enlargement, at great cost, of the buildings in which it was carried on. To the utmost of its ability the Church has responded to the claim of every religious and philanthropic movement which could fairly ask for its support. In evidence of this it may be mentioned that the sum of nearly 1000*l.* is annually contributed to objects outside of the Church.

It is always dangerous to forecast the future. Movements of population, decay of spiritual life, and many other causes, make it impossible to tell how a Church may stand after the lapse of half a century. In many cities Castle Gate would have been already numbered among the "down-town" churches, and threatened with the problem of empty pews. Nottingham, the fairest city of the Midlands, has this special characteristic, that the Park, which is the equivalent of the "West End," is only five minutes' walk from the heart of the city, and wealth and poverty live in close proximity around the Great Market Place. Castle Gate, Houndsgate, and Friar Lane are daily traversed by the inhabitants of the Park on their way to city office and warehouse. No extension of the city that can at present be anticipated will remove the "West End" from the slums that

cluster round the eastern side of the Castle Rock, and therefore Castle Gate is not likely, in the near future, to become the Church of a single class whether rich or poor. Its strength in the past has been that it has welded into a living fellowship representatives of all classes of the community.

One of the brightest hopes of the future lies in the marvellous devotion of the members to the Church in which they and their fathers have worshipped God. Members are reluctant to sever their connection with the Church. They rather suffer all the inconvenience of a long journey to the house of God. There are many who could not contemplate the removal of their names from the Church roll without the greatest grief. Not a few families have been connected with the Church for more than a hundred years, and representatives of the fourth generation of worshippers are not uncommon. Castle Gate Church is strong in the love of her members, many of whom can say, with full hearts,

"We love the venerable house
Our fathers built to God:
In heaven are kept their grateful vows,
Their dust endears the sod.

"Here holy thoughts a light have shed
From many a radiant face,
And prayers of tender hope have spread
A perfume through the place."

Throughout its history Castle Gate Church has been singularly fortunate in the men who have filled the office of deacon, and acted as its leaders. From



PRESENT DEACONS.

the days of the Cromwellian Captain Wright to the present time men conspicuous for ability, influence, devotion, and ripe Christian experience have willingly placed their services at the disposal of the Church. They have taken the initiative in every forward movement, and in times of difficulty their wise counsel and steadfast devotion have been a source of strength. The noble traditions of the past are maintained by those who form the present diaconate, and their devotion to the interests of the Church is one of the best assets of the future.

For many years one of the special attractions at Castle Gate has been the service of praise. For twenty years Mr. John Adcock gave his brilliant powers of leadership to the training of the choir. He combined the taste of a musician with the reverence of a worshipper, hence, organ and choir were used with perfect taste to awaken and stimulate the devotional feeling. When he resigned, in 1898, he was succeeded by Mr. F. W. Christall, A.R.C.O., under whose able conductorship the choir maintains its high reputation.

No Church, however deep the attachment of its members, can live on the past. The gospel is the power of God, and the Church is the bearer of the gospel to every age. The Church must meet the requirements of its time and place. And it is not difficult to see that from a Church situated like Castle Gate there will in the future be a growing demand for social service. The problems of poverty, intemperance, gambling, and overcrowding in insanitary

houses, are to be found within a stone's throw of Castle Gate Church. Hundreds are living below the poverty-line. Thousands who earn a living do not know how to live. A day of monotonous toil is too often followed by an evening of debauch. Recreation is one of the fundamental needs of the busy toiler. To find it in a home in the slums is wellnigh impossible. To look for it in the public-house or on the streets is to court temptation. The social institute, with its recreative and educational influences, is the modern response to the great need, and experience has proved its value. To counteract evil influences is to do God's work, to prepare the way for the reception of the gospel of forgiveness and grace, and to give the gospel, when received, a chance to bring forth the fair fruit of virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, brotherly kindness, charity. There can be little doubt that the special call of the new age comes to a Church like Castle Gate from the slums of the city. Something has been done to answer that call, but more is required. Whether the Church responds by the establishment of an Institute on a larger scale ; by carrying the gospel in an attractive form into the streets and alleys around : by using its influence to secure decent dwellings for the poor, or by any other form of social and religious effort, there can be no doubt it will be found in the future as in the past, that the path of service is the path of progress.

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